

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

Elizabeth Archibald is a Fellow of King's College, Cambridge.  
 Stephen Bann is Reader in Modern Cultural Studies at the University of Kent.  
 Caroline Bingham is the author of *James I of England*, 1981.  
 Peter Bland's most recent collection of poems is *Stone Tents*, 1981.  
 Julio Briggs is a Fellow of Herford College, Oxford.  
 Lou Burnard is a database consultant at the University of Oxford's computing service.  
 Angela Carter's most recent novel, *Nigels at the Circus*, was published earlier this year.  
 Maurven Cain is the author of *Society and the Politician's Role*, 1973.  
 M. T. Clanchy is the author of *England and Its Rulers 1066-1272*, 1984.  
 Nigel Clive is a former member of HM Diplomatic Service.  
 Stefano Collini is co-author, with Donald Winch and John Burrow, of *That Noble Science of Politics: A Study in Nineteenth-century Intellectual History*, 1983.  
 Jim Crace is a feature writer for the *Sunday Telegraph Magazine*.  
 Valentine Cuaningham is the editor of *Peignin Book of Spanish Civil War Verse*, 1980.  
 Daniel C. Dennett is the author of *Brainstorms*, 1978.  
 Frances Donaldson's *The British Council: The first fifty years* was reviewed in the TLS last week.  
 Ivon Fallon is Deputy Editor of *The Sunday Times*.  
 Jeremy Hardie is a businessman.  
 Peter Hebblethwaite's *Pope John XXIII: Pope of the Council* was published earlier this year.  
 Christopher Hitchens is Washington columnist of the *Nation*.  
 Jeffrey Hackney is a Fellow of Wadham College, Oxford.  
 Adam Hodgkin is an editor with the Oxford University Press.  
 T. W. Hutchison is the author of *The Philosophy and Politics of Economics*, 1981.  
 P. N. Johnson-Laird's most recent book, *Mental Models*, was published last year.  
 David McKitterick is an Assistant Librarian at Cambridge University Library.  
 Bernard O'Donoghue's collection of poems, *Razorblades and Pencils*, was published last year.  
 David Papineau is the author of *Theory and Meaning*, 1980.  
 Carter Ratcliff's most recent book is *Andy Warhol*, 1982.  
 Tom Shippey is Professor of English Language and Medieval Literature at the University of Leeds.  
 Stuart Sutherland is Professor of Experimental Psychology at the University of Sussex.  
 Michael Tanner is a lecturer in Philosophy at the University of Cambridge.  
 Arthur Terry is the author of *Cavalier Literature*, 1972.  
 E. S. Turner's most recent book is *An ABC of Nostalgia*, 1984.  
 George Zarnecki's books include *Romanesque Art*, 1972.

## INFORMATION, PLEASE

Sir Charles Sherrington, Professor of Physiology, Oxford University, 1913-35: correspondence, lecture notes, manuscripts, memorabilia, etc; also any books and other material relevant to the history of brain research in all its aspects for a new History of Neuroscience Library.  
 Colin Blakemore.  
 University Laboratory of Physiology, Parks Road, Oxford OX1 3PT.  
 George Saiko (1892-1962), author of *Auf den Floss* (1948), *Der Mann im Schiff* (1956), etc: letters to or from him sought; for inclusion in Volume 1, the Correspondence, of a projected four-volume edition of Saiko's works.  
 Barbara Brunner.  
 Residenz Verlag, Galsbergstrasse 6, A-5020 Salzburg, Austria.  
 Women during the Second World War: material sought for an anthology of letters and diaries written by women during the war.  
 Annette Tapert.  
 8 Goble Place, London SW3.  
 Angna Enters, American dance-mime, author and artist: any reminiscences, programmes, reviews and interview clippings, and photographs, of her London stage appearances and art exhibits from 1929-31, 1934, 1938, 1949-52 and 1956; for a biography.  
 S. Maedel.  
 Department of English, Hellems 101 - Campus Box 226, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309, USA.  
 Helen Smith, author of *Not So Quiet... Six daughters of War* (London: Albert Harricot 1930): information about the present copyright-holder or literary estate.  
 Ursula Owen.  
 Virago Press, 41 William IV Street, London WC2 4DB.  
 Sir Thomas Andrew Lunan's *Strange* (1756-1841), Chief Justice of Nova Scotia and Indian jurist: whereabouts of his manuscript autobiography; for a partial edition.  
 J. B. Cahill.  
 79 Doul Avenue, Halifax, Nova Scotia B3N 1Z1, Canada.  
 Alwyn Parker (1877-1951), of Folsom, Thursley, Godalming, clerk and later librarian, Foreign Office: whereabouts and ownership of his papers, especially his diary; for book on Britain's intervention in the First World War.  
 C. H. D. Howard.  
 15 Sunnyside Gardens, Mill Hill, London, NW 3PD.  
 Leonid Pasternak: correspondence, photographs, unpublished memoirs, and information about works not registered with a major museum; for a catalogue raisonné.  
 Lewis Bernard Sokolnick.  
 Amherst, MA 01004-1043, USA.  
 Angus Wilson: information from non-standard sources for a complete primary and secondary bibliography now being compiled.  
 Anne N. Thomas.  
 PO Box 19, New Vernon, NJ 07976, USA.

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## Made in Birmingham

Peter Clarke

DAVID DILKS  
*Neville Chamberlain: Volume One, Pioneering and reform, 1869-1929*  
645pp. Cambridge University Press. £20, 0521257247

He was not a lovable man. The phrases of those whom he worsted in politics have lived on to damn him from beyond the grave. His was the "retail mind in a wholesale business" which Lloyd George deprecated from the point of view of a wholesaler who had been put out of business for good by a vindictive combination among retailers. Churchill, who suffered a comparable eclipse before destiny ultimately supervened, gave him credit for having been a good Lord Mayor of Birmingham - in a lean year. Even Attlee, though hardly renowned as a charismatic leader in this league, dismissed him as a radio set tuned to Midland Regional; and to others on the Labour benches he simply looked as though he had been "weaned on a pickle". Many bitter things had been said about his father Joseph, and it was his half-brother Austen who was slightly described as always playing the game and always losing it; but it was left to Neville Chamberlain to reap an unusually fecund harvest of mingled contempt and derision.

Chamberlain's political career ended in failure, as he could hardly fail to recognize. As Prime Minister from 1937, he had dedicated himself to the preservation of peace, and war broke out instead. With the coming of the Second World War, the whole Chamberlainite system entered a phase of terminal collapse. May 10, 1940, was not a happy day for the retail trade; the shutters came down at Birmingham Town Hall and the Midland Regional was switched off; infants cried in vain for their pickles. Once Churchill was installed as Prime Minister in his place, the Chamberlainite system seemed like a vast wreck. He was unrestrained in his search for the guilty men. Moreover, Churchill and his cronies had now hijacked the Conservative party, which distanced itself from the embarrassing legacy of appeasement and unemployment, retrospectively perceived as the distinguishing features of the Chamberlain years. Old scores were paid off in a way that reverberated through the politics and historiography of the next two decades.

Politically, the men of Munich were stigmatized. Having had Churchill foisted upon it accidentally as leader in 1940, the Conservative party found itself the victim of a rather more purposeful accident when Macmillan succeeded Eden in 1957. The historical reputation of Chamberlain, inadequately safeguarded by Sir Keith Felling's official life of 1946, was not convincingly retrieved by Ian Macleod's quixotic biographical essay in 1961. Nor did Chamberlain's stock rise as a result of the historiographical reappraisal of the origins of the Second World War, inaugurated by A. J. P. Taylor (though Churchill's may have fallen a bit). Similarly, attempts to rehabilitate Baldwin, not ineffectual in themselves, have often sought to absolve him of blame for appeasement by making his successor carry the can. And whatever sophisticated revisions may now be accepted by historians, the very name "Munich" carries its own pejorative charge in Anglo-American politics. Particularly in this true of right-wing politics, as Mrs Thatcher's rhetoric over the Falklands and President Reagan's over Grenada demonstrates. If conservative leaders aspire to play Churchill on the world stage, who can hope to rescue Chamberlain?

David Dilks has all the right credentials as Chamberlain's biographer. He served an apprenticeship to successive Conservative leaders in compiling their memoirs: first the three bulky tomes giving Eden's apologia, then the five majestic volumes which Macmillan presented, not so much as his *chef d'oeuvre* as his *oeuvre* to his diaries. These mighty works are not lacking in wit and imagination - indeed their accounts of such episodes as Suez are nothing if not works of the imagination - but for their research they relied heavily upon the services of young Dilks, their page-boy, one might say, or footman. In the process

fitted to undertake the ultimate task of reconciliation in Conservative hagiology. A paper he gave to the Royal Historical Society a few years ago on Chamberlain and Churchill in 1940 set the tone. From this it appeared that there was no longer any need to choose which of the two to idolize since their final collaboration was one which "reflects high credit upon both and which may without extravagance be called crucial to the war effort". Hence Dilks's conclusion that whereas "we have had special cause to recall what Sir Winston used to describe as the long and splendid continuity of our island story, and to remember with affection and gratitude his own part in it", it should be thought "unnecessary and unworthy to magnify that part by denigrating others".

The author begins the first volume of his amply proportioned biography in the same way and on the same note. Throughout its six hundred pages there is a steady exercise in tilting the scales against prevailing adverse judgments



Quintin Hogg, government candidate in the Oxford by-election which was held soon after the Munich agreement, asking girls at a laundry to vote for him and show their confidence in Neville Chamberlain's foreign policy. Reproduced from *Picture Post* 1938-50, edited by Tom Hopkinson, now reissued in paperback (288pp, Chatto and Windus, £8.95, 0 7011 2838 5).

on Chamberlain, sometimes explicitly taking issue with the existing literature, more often wrestling with it covertly. Readers will owe Dilks a large debt of gratitude for putting before them so much of the evidence upon which they can form their own judgments. This is the story through Neville's eyes, indeed largely through Neville's correspondence, especially with his unmarried sisters. The tight-knit life-long loyalties of the Chamberlain clan are brought out well. Calling themselves "the Click", they prided themselves on the fact that if any one of them was bit, they all hit back. The Kennedys in our own day, the boys were determined to get on in politics partly to gratify the unfulfilled ambitions of their father Joseph, lying paralysed as an old man in the family home. It was Austen Chamberlain who was supposed to succeed - sent off to Cambridge, sporting a monocle and orchid to prove that he was a chip off the old block. It was Neville alone among the Chamberlains who actually got to the top of the greasy pole, but by a very odd route.

It took Chamberlain nearly fifty years, and takes his biographer nearly two hundred and fifty pages, before his arrival in Parliament. These pages are not wasted for they cover two episodes of abiding significance. The first was Andros. This small island in the Bahamas was said to be suitable for the cultivation of sisal as a cash crop. It was just the sort of undeveloped estate of which Joseph Chamberlain was to appear as Colonial Secretary, hoping to encourage British investment "for the benefit of the population and for the benefit of the greater population which is outside". Dilks comments that "this now sounds like a declaration of an obvious moral and practical duty". It is not clear, however, from his account some thirty pages previously whether such motives or a change to recruit and repair the family fortunes were uppermost in Joseph's mind over Andros. Howsoever, young Neville - "a boy

world whatever", as he later put it - was dispatched to oversee the clearing and planting of the land.

Throughout five formative years he fought against the odds to make the enterprise successful, and it taught him a lot. When the labourers went on strike for higher wages, he slipped in others from Nassau: a good lesson in labour relations. The doings of the black workers provided him with a fund of patronizing stories to retail to his sisters, just as munitions workers and family servants were to do in later years. Little wonder that he wrote in 1895: "even if it turns out a failure I am not sure that I should regret the years I have spent here. The responsibility and independence have certainly called out whatever was in me and shown me that I was worth more than I thought." It revealed him, to Churchill's later surprise, as "a hard bitten pioneer from the outer marches of the British Empire".

The wretched sisal, however, would not

once what Chamberlain should have done to put Lloyd George on the spot and to bring realities into line with the grandiloquent prospectus he had outlined. Failing to grasp the nettle at the outset, Chamberlain found his position unenviable. While he recorded that "it rather appeared I had no power to do any of the things that might produce any effect", his colleague Addison concluded: "He seems not to know even now what he is going to do and does not appear to have the remotest notion as to how he is going to do it." Brushing aside Macleod, Dilks opts for an elaborate extenuation of Chamberlain's record. In face of criticism, he maintains, the staff manifested "complete loyalty to the Director-General", but the fact that his source is a letter written by Chamberlain himself to his sister Hilda somewhat detracts from the authority of the statement. At another point even this source dries up and Chamberlain's inability to explain himself is attributed to "the inhibitions which prevented him from confiding even to Ida and Hilda his difficulties with the War Cabinet and other departments". Failing other evidence, it is a pity that Dilks did not find room to quote the final verdict of the man who made the appointment: "Mr Neville Chamberlain is a man of rigid competency. Such men have their uses in conventional times or in conventional positions, and are indispensable for filling subordinate posts at all times. But they are lost in an emergency or in creative tasks at any time."

Lloyd George's unflattering opinion of Chamberlain was faithfully reciprocated, and he is hardly allowed to step into this biography without receiving a slighting epithet from either its subject or its author. The full of Lloyd George in 1922 helped Chamberlain's swift rise into the space left at the top of the Conservative party by the former Coalitionists, now discredited. Among these, of course, was Austen, and it was lucky that Neville's absence in America at the critical juncture meant that an action: "I have had my time of scorching humiliation and don't need to be told what it means." A certain amount of fence-mending all round had to take place before they both found places in Baldwin's Cabinet.

It was in 1923 that Neville Chamberlain discovered the great love of his life: the Ministry of Health. Here he was in his element, overseeing the vast field of local government as a connoisseur and, above all, working on trambines, not to mention other municipal functions. As he told Baldwin, "the work of my present office is congenial because it follows naturally from my training". Heartbroken, he was snatched from this demi-paradise within a matter of months to become Chancellor of the Exchequer. "Perhaps after all I may still go back to the Ministry some day", he wrote pluckily, "but it will be difficult as Austen knows to get away from the beastly Treasury." Only fifteen months later, his passion was requited and he found himself in a position to fend off Baldwin's offer of the reversion to the Treasury. "I remain convinced that I might be a great Minister of Health but am not likely to be more than a second rate Chancellor." His work at the Ministry of Health constitutes a solid record of achievement of which the existing literature has already taken adequate cognizance. This account tallies with it but is naturally personal rather than institutional in its emphasis.

Dilks devotes a whole chapter to the General Strike and another to its aftermath. Chamberlain's role in the negotiations with the miners is illuminated through his correspondence with his sisters. "The miners don't think of the reorganisation in precise terms of reduction of costs", he wrote; "they rather picture grievances, stupidities, injustices which they have personally come up against and they want to have a certainty that these things will be put right before they give up anything." The intransigence of the miners, however, evidently could not be relied upon, for the Government is shown, on the eve of the strike, fearful that they might be prevailed upon to accept the TUC's peace formula. Ready now for a fight, Chamberlain found the Cabinet tottering on the brink of a peaceful settlement and proposed a stern ultimatum to preclude this possibility. The Cabinet was instead saved by the refusal of the printers on the *Daily Mail* to print

John is 16



## Among the connoisseurs of suffering

monly inhabitants of the Home Counties, who for one reason or another have failed to learn from experience; or else people, often Eastern Europeans, who have learnt rather too much and sometimes need to unlearn. The mistakes and misdoings of both groups would provoke an easy censoriousness were it not for the general insights which an even-handed author supplies *en route*. "You can judge your dis-

one touch of wry humour. Miss Peacock cannot endure visiting her brother on his sick-bed – death-bed as it turns out – but is happy to wait on her friend Laurs, with whom she shares a cottage and who "had always been delicate and was likely to be so for many years to come". "Fingers in the Door" is painful, physically so, simply because poor Andrew gets his fingers caught in a carriage door.

Pleasure tends to be a visitant, Keats wrote, whereas pain clings cruelly to us. Pleasure visits us as we read Frank Tugoby's stories (his three earlier volumes *The Admiral* and *The Nuns*, *Fingers in the Door* and *Live Bait* are collected here entire), more often than not yielding to a clinging, though less than cruel, pain. There is a certain kinship, not merely in the exotic settings, with Paul Theroux; indeed the Consul of "Two Private Lives" is possibly creepier, more odious, than any of Theroux's characters. But on balance Tugoby is less inclined to pass a final, irrevocable judgment; he shows less loathing, or contempt, for his creations than does Theroux in his recent collections of stories. Touches of relaxed humour, of the worldly shrewdness we call wit, soften the pain, somewhat. We have been in those situations ourselves: we have survived.

"I've got a surprise for you." The narrator of "The Admiral and the Nuns" comments: "Ever since I can remember, these words have possessed a more sudden and violent power to depress than almost any others." This particular surprise, we know, is bound to be painful in the event, it being a ticket for the Coronation Ball held at the British Club, somewhere in South America. The Polish husband of an Englishwoman behaves there in the way expected of him: "the peasant who comes to the big city to get drunk and chase women". Similarly, his wife behaves as is expected of her, a "pure Kensington" daughter of an admiral. One wants her to rise superior to her misfortunes (some of them self-induced), the more so in that she has been branded a trivial-minded product of the "genteel" class. To one's gratified surprise, she does: "Up the Navy!"

Looking back to his schooldays, the narrator of "A War of Liberation" recalls how at the end of each term they sang "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing" and he would then go home "to dismiss everyone else". After the War he was to encounter this same categorizing habit in Europe, and later in Shanghai: the English were classified as "unreal" by those "who had grown to be connoisseurs of their own suffering". In "The Trap" the author gets even for that classification. An Englishman who has taught in Poland is faced with a former student, a sad woman come to London specially to see him. Miss Rodzinska, with her salmon-pink coat, grey suit, grey sandals and handbag made of grey plastic, "belonged in fact to the Plastic Age of Communism, when people no longer look proletarian but lower middle class". Miss Rodzinska finds griggish fault with England but insists that she cannot return home now. The teacher reflects on "the tiny distance that divides the great peace of mutual attraction from the warfare of that which is not mutual"; the tiny distance is what he is trying to preserve between his knees and hers under the restaurant table. She is one of those "connoisseurs of their own suffering": the suffering is genuine enough, and this is her "last throw", but – he tells himself – historical debts cannot be charged to the account of private individuals. "If Miss Rodzinska wanted to be loved, she must try at least to be as nice as other people. And poor, poor girl, she was not."

His pain made no concession to the modesty of the circumstances: it raged there as it does before indifferent eyes in police cells and hospital wards. This time it had chosen to make its howling declaration in a first-class carriage of British Railways.

It is not the done thing to howl in public, and Andrew has spoilt his daughter's birthday outing and embarrassed his wife dreadfully. When he seeks to mollify her: "Look, love, there's an interesting yellow tint coming up", his wife retorts, "Don't be disgusting." But, like the Home Counties, gentility is too easy a target, particularly so now that it is to all appearances a dead horse. If gentility, snobbery, social pretensions have to be dealt with, probably the best way is that employed in "Thunderbolt", where the inane chatter of the two adult women is counterpointed with the unspoken brutish knowledge of the two young people, the son of one woman and the "house guest" of the other, that before long they will be in bed together. For once a silence is truly pregnant.

The stories set in Poland or featuring Poles rank among the most impressive here; for one thing, the embarrassments they record are more deadly than those arising in the Home Counties, and the author seems himself to be more deeply engaged. The three Japanese stories are first-rate, too; and in this line of country Tuohy faces stiff competition from Francis King. The most quivery of social embarrassments occurs in "A Summer Pilgrim", when an ageing English poet is visited by a young woman, formerly a student of his in Japan. Obligated to partake of gluey lamb, Miss Hitomi is not helped by remembering the atory of a Japanese bride when, after breaking wind

**To make matters worse, the only present from Japan that her old teacher wants is her.**

The view that you can judge your distance from civilization by the state of the dogs is, by chance, ironically glossed in "The Matchmakers." The first embarrassment is suffered, in advance, by Staszek Kopczynski when his aunt, a former courtesan, instructs him to arrange a delicate matter with the niece of the British Ambassador: the English girl's cocker spaniel is to mate with the aunt's female counterpart. "Of course," Staszek tells the girl, "in this country is already danger of inbreeding." The initial discomfort quickly fades, since Englishwomen are used to animals: "He's two years old already and he may get to be no good, besides being frightfully neurotic." The second embarrassment is political, and considerably more serious, especially since Staszek makes a precarious living as a music critic. He is found to have been consorting with Western diplomats — so no more passports for him to attend music festivals abroad.

More complex and wholly unexpected in its dénouement is "A Survivor in Salvador", which concerns a Polish ex-prince, "living on promises, on his title, on his bridge game" who in his arrogance is prepared, like some other connoisseurs of their own suffering, to stoop to almost anything – "ns if he believed that his contempt for his associates kept him from losing honour". Down on his luck, ready at last to give up the burden of surviving, he is rescued by a Brazilian prostitute. She too has suffered, but that is what she has learnt to expect, she is no connoisseur. And out of a seemingly total squalor grows an unlikely yet true tenderness. The story serves to modify the view, expressed by the narrator of another tale, that "whatever your experiences are, it is you who choose them to make the pattern". Here, and elsewhere in this rich collection, it is pleasure – something much more substantial than a mere cessation or evasion of pain – that drives us on. *We have made a selection of*

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# Change unchanging

Peter Hainsworth

JOHN ASHBURY  
A Wave  
89pp. Manchester: Carcanet. £4.95.  
085635547X

A Wave is John Ashbery's tenth book of poetry, and one of his best. Too much that he has written recently has been rather dull experiment. The quatrains of *Shadow Train* (1981) were all too often little more than lax five-finger exercises in superficially regular form, and *As we know* (1979) was dominated by the sixty pages of "Litany", which, in spite of fascinating sections (particularly on literary criticism), suffered from the over-casual juxtaposition of the two monologues of which it was composed. Still, some of the shorter pieces in *As we know* – say "Train Rising Out of the Sea" or "Late Echo" – had pointed in a different direction. It is this which is now followed through in *A Wave* and reaches its high point in the long, absorbing poem which gives the collection its title.

In *A Wave* Ashbery has returned to the serious playfulness of *Houseboat Days* and earlier books, but, though there is much in *A Wave* that is jokey, seriousness has the edge. Not that anything previously said is recanted: everything is, rather, reaffirmed, but with a more open voicing of implications and consequences. Final truths that used to be recognized only to be postponed or displaced are now given prominence, with the result that as a whole *A Wave* contains more explicit and more moving writing than perhaps anything else that Ashbery has done.

Ashbery is a poet of mutability, for whom nothing is constant except change itself. His concerns are with the incompleteness, instability and fragmentariness of our lives, and the impossibility of getting whatever is going on into a perspective that is in any way accurate. That is not in itself a particularly original or distinctive line of thought. But European poets

are to be set some image of stability – God, perhaps, or love which alters not, or the powerful rhyme. Ashbery has always taken the opposite, more American path, and tried to embrace change, as if the mistake were to resist it or to look for a human order in it. In a sense he is an Emersonian who sees life as something much larger and more eventful than any individual or collective understanding can cater for. But he is confident, like Emerson (whom he sometimes echoes), that things will take care of themselves and of us if we only let them. "We get lost in life, but life knows where we are," is a line from "More Pleasant Adventures" which sums up, with perhaps cosy sentimentality, that side of Ashbery which wants to surrender to the flow of things and believe that it is good. More frequently the dominating mood is a sophisticated New York hedonism that plays with images of contemporary America and with a soft-spoken, slightly mannered version of its language without assigning a definite value to any of the transient phantasmas. The visual and linguistic spectacle becomes enjoyable for its surprises, its sensual possibilities and the chances it offers of looking into an underlying void which Ashbery has always refused to see as terrifying.

What is disconcerting and – at least for enthusiasts – exhilarating about his work, is the absorption of the play of mutability into the substance of his verse. Ashbery is a radically mimetic artist who aims to reproduce experience as directly as possible, while making it plain that the gap between words and things is infinite; reality has always passed on, or at least is absent from what we are reading. There is a disorientation involved in encountering a veridically shifting something that constantly implies that it is nothing, and this makes his work seem difficult, provoking suggestions that he deconstructs the image at the very moment of creating it. And of course the risk is that this kind of writing will get completely out of control. "I always answer the telephone", Ashbery said in a 1979 interview, "and I find it helps me with my work." In some Ashbery poems the

person from Porlock has been allowed to interfere too much. But in his best work there is a brilliantly unpredictable shaping of the poem, which seems to spring directly from the flow of composition, much as the structure of a Japanese painting is supposed to do.

This shaping is a good deal more apparent in *A Wave* than in many other books, partly because the reflective element is so much more explicit. Take "I See, Said the Blind Man, As He Put Down His Hammer and Saw", which opens with a characteristic roller-coaster ride: There is some charm in that old music He'd left for when the night wind released it – Pleasant to be away; the stones fall back: The hill of gloom in place over the roar Of the kitchens but with remembrance like a bright patch

Of red in a bunch of laundry. But will the car Ever pull away and spunky at all times he'd Got the mission between the ladder And the slices of bread someone had squirted astrology over

Until it took the form of a man, oblique, out of pocket Perhaps, probably standing there.

The prosiness is deceptive: it is really an undecidable invitation to read the lines as if they had the meanings of normal discursive writing. And once drawn in, the reader is hurled from one undefined context to another, the disorientation being compounded by the repeated shifts of register. Drawing-room conversation in the opening line, a little poetry ("the hill of gloom"), more colourful suggestions of past violence ("a bright patch of red in a bunch of laundry"), linguistic desecration ("squirled astrology") – all flash by before we can reach the man we can stop and look at. Earlier Ashbery might well have gone on into further metamorphoses or left us there to make the best of what is in fact a richly compressed symbolism. But the Ashbery of *A Wave* is insistent that we should think about the image that has just come into focus. "Can't you see how we need these far-from-restful pauses?" he now asks in the opening of the second section, and in the remainder of the poem he expands on the implications of this, its middle line and its final line. The blind man has seen, but only

for a moment, and the image is gone, leaving only the suggestion of a momentary glimpse of something that is not there. The poem is a series of moments, each of which is a small, self-contained universe, and each of which is a small, self-contained universe, and each of which is a small, self-contained universe.

which will eventually put an end to each of us and are already at work even as we read and think:

The error Of these thoughts laughs at itself  
Yet the distances are always growing  
With everything between, in between.

It is an elegiac, even sombre close to a poem that began flippantly. And this darker note sounds through a good deal of the collection. As serious bedonista have always known, to continue to take things as they come and to find pleasure in them when endings are in sight demands disciplined awareness, not resignation or a desperate resorting to transcendence. We know what is coming, that we are moving Dangerously and gracefully Toward the resolution of time. Blurred but alive, with many separate meanings Inside this conversation.

## Toiling after Horace

Lachlan Mackinnon

ALISTAIR ELLIOT  
On the Appian Way  
82pp. Secker and Warburg. £5.95.  
0436142619

Alistair Elliot sleeps with malleable wax in his ears. He acknowledges that this won't silence "the noise inside", and has a brief dream about the music who guides him along the route from Rome to Brindisi, taken by Horace in *Satires* 1.5. This vision rather contradicts his assertion that "My rule of thumb / Is to oppose the Id, and hope it's wrong," but in its imaginative intensity it stands with a regrettably small number of passages in this long poem. Climbing Monte Tifata, Elliot finds:

A sad mass: there's an ape, some lipstick-traces  
Of fresco (bleeding hands and rubble faces).  
Three walls against the cloudy cooties.

This affective vignette makes Elliot lose his footing, though, and it is only six couplets later that the verse form starts again to coincide with



Eric Fischl's "Time for Bed" (1981), reproduced from *An International Survey of Recent Painting and Sculpture* compiled by Kynaston McShane (364pp. Thames and Hudson. £16.75. 0870703919).

In the end it is the present which is still the issue. "Rain Moving In" makes a readily graspable statement of how most readers of poetry must be situated with respect to their origins and their final resting-places:

The dial has been set  
And that's ominous, but all your graciousness in  
Conspires with it, now that this is our home:  
A place to be from, and have people ask about.  
But in other poems there is a more breath-taking evocation of a sustaining void that has to be seen even in the midst of destruction:

And so each day  
Culminates in merriment as well as a deep shock  
like an electric one.

Of more obscure ones, and books with no author, letting in  
Space, and an extraneous babble from the street  
Confirming the new value the hollow core has again,  
From the lighthouse that protects as it pushes us away.

*A Wave* is a rich collection which approaches its central concerns from a variety of angles. Haiku or pseudo-haiku accent the orientaling aspect of Ashbery's imagination. But then a series of jokey prose pieces, which Ashbery calls "haibun", play off prose against haiku. Other prose pieces are even more flagrantly unpoetic, especially the narrative "Description of a Masque", which spreads its pantomimic representation of metamorphosis over twelve somewhat loose pages.

Lastly there is the title poem, "A Wave" is a complex orchestration of the theme of mutability

his meaning. Metre, indeed, is the poem's main problem. Elliot has chosen the heroic couplet, but uses so many run-on lines that the form becomes doggerel. Occasionally the verse responds to what it says, as when

Near me, a father bites an octopus  
Leg off, handing his wife the sinuous  
Body over his shoulder, as, mouth full, he says.  
The slippery contortion and the mumbling alexandrine work here as rarely elsewhere. Elliot's rhymes range from the exact through the contrived ("filius terrae" with "We stare. I") to the casual ("fellow" with "mozarella"). Similarly, the rhythm is sometimes almost indiscernible as Elliot shifts and piles his stresses. The result is that the couplet becomes a nervous tic, insufficiently disciplined to respond to Horace's example, too nagging to suggest the ghost of classical grandeur.

Sixty-four pages of verse come with ten pages of closely printed notes that flatter the poem for its artfulness. In *Terracina*, Elliot turns dendrologist: "What kind of palms are these?" he wonders, but leaves the question

hanging. Perhaps his mind was elsewhere, as the note suggests: "I was thinking of Goethe's interest, when he first came to Italy in 1786, in finding the 'primeval plant' from which all other plants might be derived. (Palms belong to one of the oldest of plant groups)."

There is too much intelligence here, too little feeling for life or language. When he arrives in Brindisi, Elliot grouches that "Brindisi is full / Of foreigners (there ought to be a cull), / Whining for something". Horace would have had more right to such a sentiment, which he would have had more wit than to express. Horace's poem is inconsequential but entertaining; Elliot's is merely inconsequential.

Nothing in the poem explains the "importance of the Horatian precedent as other than an arbitrary literary. Horace was involved in affairs of state that he studiously and teasingly avoids, while Elliot just dangles "the faces that this week / Swim to the surface of the box and speak". Three working men dismiss Elliot's wish "to see / What Horace saw" as a clever excuse for getting away from home: he does nothing to persuade us otherwise.

# To instruct and inflame

Rachel Trickett

RICHARD E. BRANTLEY  
Locke, Wesley, and the Method of English  
Rationalism  
300pp. Gainesville, FL: University Presses of  
Florida (distributed in the UK by TABS). \$30.  
0813007836  
JOHN WESLEY  
The Works: Volume 7, A Collection of Hymns  
for the use of the People called Methodists  
Edited by Franz Hildebrandt, Oliver A.  
Beckerlegge and James Dale  
848pp. Oxford University Press. £45.  
0198125291  
Hymns and Psalms: A Methodist and  
Ecumenical hymn book  
888 hymns. Methodist Publishing House.  
£9.75.  
094655000X

Richard E. Brantley amply justifies his view that John Wesley's conception of human experience – including his idea of conversion and the consciousness of salvation, owed much to Locke's epistemology. He convinces first by his evidence of Wesley's "Lockean connection" – his abridgment of Peter Browne's *The Procedure, Extent, and Limits of Human Understanding* (1728), which Brantley takes to be "a theologizing of [Locke's] Essay". Browne, Bishop of Cork and Ross, was not so substantial a figure as to account for Wesley's interest unless, as Brantley contends, Wesley had first of all recognized the Lockean basis of much Dissenting interpretation of human cognition. The book goes on to examine Wesley's philosophical theology and again is convincing in its argument that this is based on evidence (of the senses as well as of reason) which precedes conviction. So far so good.

It is when Professor Brantley goes on to write of Wesley's intellectual influence, and of the parallel interpretation of human experience in Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley, and Keats that we find ourselves unable to join him on his personal critical expedition. It is as if a contemporary critic took it upon himself to examine the influence of Freud on contemporary theologians and then made the leap to a specific connection between this and the much vaguer influence of Freud on modern poets. There is always a general affect of the *Zeitgeist* in any age, and Locke, after Descartes, dominates eighteenth-century feeling, as eighteenth-century feeling throws its shadow over developing romanticism. But, useful though it may be to relate Wesley to a more expansive imaginative vision than that of his own age, it is pointless to try to make specific or even generalized comparisons between men whose pre-occupations and understanding of the nature of revelation were so substantially distinct.

Wordsworth's references to Methodism (in *Peter Bell*, for instance) are neglected; Coleridge's theological speculations are said to be rooted in "evangelical and empirical" ideas, as if these were already one and the same, and no careful analysis of the distinction between Coleridge's original Unitarianism and Wesley's faith is attempted. The second part of this book reads too much like jottings on loosely related topics to be more than a starting-point for general speculation; it is interesting in itself, but scarcely a secure foundation for the tracing of influence and conscious imitation.

Nevertheless, there is a way in which Wesley can be connected with the emerging spirit of Romanticism – not largely, through his philosophical and theological views, but more particularly, through his and his brother's idea of the influence of poetry, and of hymnody especially, on the feelings of ordinary men. The eighteenth century saw a remarkable rebirth of interest in the language of inspiration in religious writing. Robert Louth's work on inspirational diction in the Hebrew scriptures is the best-known example of this. But a study of the eighteenth-century hymn gives us a direct illustration of how, alongside the public, declaratory, descriptive vein of the Augustans, a more personal style of address and a more fervent tone, not lacking the verbal precision and rhetorical expertise of the time, were coming into favour. Lyric poets like Gray and Collins, moved by the antiquarian fashions of the mid-century, show a tentative feeling for

rapture, or the enthusiastic which, it was

thought, was the province of primitive poetry. Wesley's hymns, and more especially his brother Charles's, without any conscious antiquarian impulse, share this quality; so did Watts's (much admired of Johnson), and the hymns of other Dissenters, Doddridge, Newton and Cowper, for instance, as well as Smetti's more original and eccentric devotional poems. The tradition of the Nonconformist hymn was essentially based upon scripture and especially on the Psalms; it incited personal devotion and public worship through the use of praise, petition and credal affirmation, not as part of a verbal ritual but expressed through communal song. The power of music was, from the start, an inextricable part of the appeal of Dissenting hymns, and such aesthetic as there was of music in the eighteenth century stressed its affective power, its sway over the sentiments and emotions of its auditors. The great hymns of the eighteenth century are lyrics, and they are more powerful in their emotional effect than most literary lyrics of the same period, though curiously, in their popular appeal, nearer to folk poetry and ballad than to the conscious creations of art.

The new and scholarly edition of John Wesley's Works now includes *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists* (1780), all of them written by the brothers John and Charles, and this persuades us to look at familiar congregational hymns as poems, printed on the page, read privately rather than recited with the sentiment attaching to tune and the congregational fervour of remembered services from the past. Charles Wesley's hymns stand this test so triumphantly that this edition, and, for wider reasons, the new Methodist and Ecumenical hymn book, *Hymns and Psalms*, published this year, must establish him as one of the finest lyric poets of his age. It is extraordinary to realize the range of his metrical accomplishment, the sustained fervour of his devotional imagination, the mastery of diction, of syntactical transition and of range of imagery is limited and repeated.

Wesley's hymns are limited and repeated, but they are also original. But it is a useful lesson to literary critics to examine poems like "Wrestling Jacob" – "Come, O thou traveller unknown / Whom still I feel but cannot see" – that brooding, mysterious masterpiece which in fact transcends its musical accompaniment, as an example of how the use of traditional, scriptural language, consciously and scrupulously deployed, may actually intensify the sense of individual experience.

For this to succeed it needs a common stock of scriptural allusion and knowledge, and Charles Wesley assumes this as he writes. But the Dissenters also intended a didactic purpose in their hymns; these were to instruct as well as to inflame. The lessons of scripture, the truths of revealed doctrine are the themes of their hymns. There is an assumption of absolute truth which lies behind their tone of simple assurance and its consequent rapture. It might, therefore, be said that these hymns must, therefore, be period pieces, themselves instances of literary or devotional archaism and accessible nowadays only to the instructed or the scholarly few. The preface to the new Methodist and Ecumenical hymn book, *Hymns and Psalms*, disproves this notion completely. The compilers tell us that they not only consulted with other denominations in their choice of hymns, but that

careful note has been taken throughout of the public response to preliminary drafts of its contents. There is no doubt that one result of this public participation has been to give *Hymns and Psalms* a breadth of appeal and sympathy which should greatly assist its avowed intention of assisting the growing together of the people of God.

Public response demanded the retention of the familiar; there are more hymns by the Wesley brothers here than by any other group of nineteenth or twentieth-century writers. Nonconformist opinion has proved its devotion to the hymn as an expression of belief, communal and personal; and of credal, orthodox belief at that.

An interesting example of this comes from the modern hymns included in the collection. For the most part they are either verses of praise based, as in the tradition, on the Psalms, or reaffirmations of the Protestant doctrine of grace and redemption. One bold attempt to

incorporate present-day scientific knowledge into the idea of the redemption, "Lord of the boundless curves of space / And time's deep mystery" (No 335 by Althert F. Bayly and Brian A. Wren), contrasts sadly with the preceding, Watts's "I sing the almighty power of God" – but the contrast is one of an inert as opposed to a lively language, rather than of any difference in intention. There are good modern hymns included here – John Arlott's (No 344), George Caird's (No 364) and Norman Nicholson's (No 380). Most illuminating in comparison are Robert Bridges's hymns, cool in tone, perhaps, but exquisitely contrived in metre, most skilfully fashioned in a way that looks back to the seventeenth-century writers. "Thee will I love, my God and King / Thee will I sing" (No 40) is as perfectly adjusted to music as No 572, "Think of a world without flowers", is impossible to accommodate to any conceivable congregational rendering.

But the power of this splendid anthology rests still with the great hymns of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Watts's "I'll praise my maker while I've breath / And when my eyes are closed in death, / Praise shall employ my nobler powers" leaps out from the page with its magnificent affirmation, repeated in the concluding stanza: I'll praise him while he lends me breath, And when my voice is lost in death, Praise shall employ my nobler powers; My days of praise shall ne'er be past, While life and thought and being last, Or immortality endures.

The consciousness of the stanzaic measure required by the hymn wonderfully concentrated the syntax and vocabulary of these earlier poems and suited them to singing. Richard Baxter's meditative poem:

He wants not friends that hath thy love,  
And may converse and walk with thee,  
And with thy saints here and above,  
With whom for ever must be

which has the tone of monologue, is still, in its simplicity, suitable for congregational use.

Herald Angels sing" has no crib, no ox nor ass, merely a splendid statement of the doctrine of the Incarnation and the Redemption, but (assisted it must be admitted by Mendelssohn's tune) could only be rejected by the rashest of innovators. Yet does the present-day congregation understand what Charles Wesley took for granted: "Jesus, our Emmanuel"? The compilers do not alter it, though they changed a similar allusion in Robert Robinson's great hymn "Come thou fount of every blessing" (No 517); from "Here I find my Ebenezer" to "Here I find my greatest treasure": the rhyme in their new version is, it must be admitted, truer, and we may well forgive them that change.

The modest but genuine talent of Philip Doddridge finds its place here, and the fervour of Newton: "Amazing Grace" has been adopted by present-day folk singers, but the words as much as the tune ("how sweet the sound") convey the simple enthusiasm that the realization of salvation – the theme of so many of these hymns – can still, even by echo, convey. Thomas Ken's chaste simplicity with which we commemorate the day and the night, "Awake my soul, and with the sun / Thy daily stage of duty run", and "Glory to thee, my God this night / For all the blessings of the light", are still here to sanctify ordinary existence. And who, among the public consulted by the compilers of this new hymn book, felt that they could not respond to the language of these earlier poets? Few, it appears. For the diction of hymns was always directed to the congregation, to the company of ordinary faithful believers, and that company has responded as it always did to the claims of conviction, utterance and poetry.

Hymns are a form of love poetry. The Wesleys understood this and succeeded, in the tradition of their Dissenting predecessors, in separating the rapture of the redeemed from the private meditations, the erotic metaphor

## Crusade and Mission

European Approaches toward the Muslims

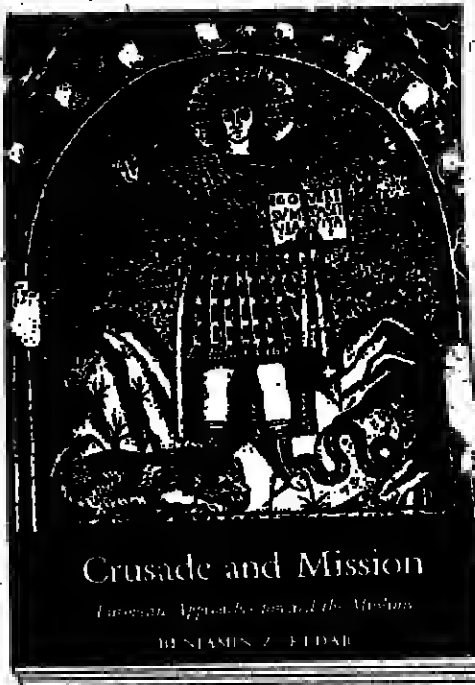
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John Z. Kedar



Putting faith in writing

C. H. Sisson

DAVID DAICHES  
God and the Poets: The Gifford Lectures, 1983  
227pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £19.50.  
0198128258

DAVID JASPER (Editor)  
Images of Belief in Literature  
195pp. Macmillan. £20.  
0333364015

MICHAEL EDWARDS  
Towards a Christian Poetics  
246pp. Macmillan. £20.  
0333354028

If God is dead, the news has not sunk in as well as it should have done. If he is still flourishing, beyond space and time, perhaps this reluctance to believe the rumour is itself divine dispensation. However that may be, the reluctance is still widespread. The adumbration is a powerful presence in all languages; at least, subject to correction, I suppose so. It is certainly present in all the great literatures, so it is hardly surprising that literary critics and anthologists should be more or less acutely aware of it, whether they take it for what it claims to be or vociferously denounce it as a sham. In these four books, the perspectives are various, but the importance of religion for literary studies is nowhere denied. One of them, *Images of Belief in Literature*, edited by David Jasper, is a collection of papers "read at the first National Conference on Literature and Religion" in Durham in 1982. The holding of the conference may suggest some diffused uneasiness on the subject.

There might well be some uneasiness, even puzzlement, and it is felt by those whose primary interest is in literary criticism as well as in those who speak for religion. The authors and editors of the books here under review take somewhat differing views of the nature of the relationship between the two but none, it is safe to say, would be likely to endorse entirely Jonathan Culler's spirited defence of Emerson's critique of "propaganda for the

Poets comprises the Gifford Lectures he gave in 1983, quotes from the Deed of Foundation drawn up by Lord Gifford, who died in 1887. The lectures, said the founder, were to be for "promoting, advancing, teaching, and diffusing the study of Natural Theology in the widest sense of that term, in other words, the Knowledge of God, the Infinite, the All, the First and Only Cause, the One and Sole Substance, the Sole Being, the Sole Reality, the Knowledge of His Nature and Attributes, the Knowledge of the Nature and Foundations of Ethics and Morals, and of all Obligations and Duties thence arising". Even without the capitals, one would be left with a sense of the importance which had been attributed to the subject, in one form or another. A truly modern touch – the modern, of course, is now getting rather old – was that the lecturers were "not to be required to take any oath, or to emit or subscribe to any declaration of belief, or to make any promise of any kind". Not even a bishop would be excluded by that.

Professor Daiches notes in passing – as he well might do, in Edinburgh – the relevance of Hume's *Dialogues on Natural Religion* and goes on to discuss "the way God emerged in a number of different poets from biblical times to the present". It is a relatively down-to-earth subject well suited to one who claims only to be "a literary critic and a literary historian". Daiches has some unusual qualifications in relation to biblical poetry, for he is a Hebrew scholar and, as the son of a rabbinical family, had an early acquaintance with the language of the Old Testament. This gives his discussion of the Book of Job – to which he devotes a fascinating first lecture – a special interest. All his illustrations, however, are drawn from poets in whom he has a long-standing interest. His reading of Dante began with "a class in Italian for English students" when he was an undergraduate at Edinburgh long ago; he devotes a lecture to "Calvinism and the Poetic Imagination: From Burns to Hogg" and one to Edwin Muir and Hugh MacDiarmid, both of whom he knew personally as well. Two English poets he draws on include Milton – his interest in whom goes back to the time when he was taught by Grierson – and George Herbert; the Americans include Wallace Stevens and Emily Dickinson as well as Whitman.

"The poetic imagination", as Daiches says, "is a pretty tough faculty", and the variety of his illustrations enables him to show it operating through or beside a variety of systems of belief, some of which might be thought to be inhibitory, as Edwin Muir seems to have thought Calvinism to be. The operation may sometimes be effected by the poem going "round behind the theology", as Daiches says *Paradise Lost* does, "to develop unexpected meanings", but a more general cause must be that between a creed, as abstractly stated, and the poet's mind – or any individual mind – there is a vast gap. What is apprehended by the observing mind is the one visible and audible world, seen and heard through the medium of all that mind has inherited from near and far. In all this the observer's theology will play no more than a modest part at best. Daiches reaches the conclusion that "far from inability of a reader to share the author's beliefs preventing him from appreciating a poem, such an inability can liberate the reader to see the poem as something more than a document of faith". He even suggests that "it is the sceptic who is the one capable of the most generous response to poetry of different ages and cultures".

One might want to qualify these conclusions, but Daiches has done well to take the argument thus far. He takes it too far, I think, when he suggests that the medieval Christian may have got less out of the *Divina Commedia* than later readers. As well say that we understand the literature of other cultures better than that of our own. I do not believe it; it is through our own language, and the rest of our inheritance, that we have to approach the works of other times and places. The point seems obvious enough, though it is not understood by the schoolmasterly monsters who have kicked the Prayer Book and the Authorized Version out of doors.

*Images of Belief in Literature*, the symposium edited by the Rev David Jasper, in-

cludes papers entitled "Job and Sophocles", "W. H. Auden: 'Horae Canonicae'", "Bishop Lowth and the Hebrew Scriptures in Eighteenth-Century England", "Simone Weil" and "Middlemarch as a Religious Novel" as well as more general matter on the relationship of literature and religion. No doubt it is only by such particular studies that the subject can be advanced. No particular study, however, can proceed very far without some general notion of what one is looking for, and both F. W. Dillistone's introduction and John Coulson's opening piece are aimed at providing some indications. The precariousness of the subject is suggested by Canon Dillistone's quotation from Graham Hough: "For intelligent people of today literature has come, consciously or unconsciously, to supply the patterns of conduct, feeling and imagination that were formerly within the sphere of organised religion." Shades of Matthew Arnold! The approach of Dr Coulson, who is building up a joint school of Religion with Literature in the University of Bristol, seems to be primarily historical, though the fact that he can more or less equate his four periods with four "modes of relationship between religion and literature" leaves one in some uncertainty on the matter. He touches on the question of how far quality of writing is involved in telling the truth; that I take it is the import of his question: "Is it the truer for being well said?" It might be contended that what is not well said says nothing at all. That is perhaps only a literary point of view, but it suggests that any complacency about what Coulson calls a "dissociation" of "culture from religion" is out of place. One might even ask if such dissociation is possible.

The danger of all general theories about literature is that they tend to become more interesting, to the clever people who discuss them, than literature itself. This is confusing because "literature" is after all only good writing, which may be about anything, from the siege of Troy or the death of Julius Caesar to the virtues of tar-water or the principles of Pythagoras and all that the world has to offer.

tries to hedge his subject a little by calling his essay "Religion and Imagination". To draw the boundaries of the imagination must be a very uncertain enterprise; to invent a theory of literature which stops at those dubious frontiers would be no great service to the health of common speech. Michael Edwards, as he sets out on his stiff climb *Towards a Christian Poetics*, is well aware of the vastness of the territory which extends around his subject. For him, to write "is inevitably to open oneself, via language, to everything essential: to the issues of the self, of the world, of the other, of God". My only quarrel with that is that I would ask whether one must not add: "and all the trivial things we encounter as well". "We do not understand literature without a theory of language", Edwards asserts, "and we do not understand either without a theory of life." It is a bold, even heroic, stand. But we do not really start with theories; if we are wise we do not end with them either, however we may choose to entertain ourselves on the way. Some of us may have to be content simply with "We do not understand", in relation to these large matters; in any case it is perhaps better to talk of recognizing literature than of understanding it. We do well if we begin to understand what a particular author is saying. Edwards's underlying "theory" is an attempt to describe the process of writing in terms of biblical Christianity, and he makes excursions into non-Christian theories and looks at non-verbal arts. The result is a book packed with ideas which demand further development. There is so much apparatus that the basic subject risks being lost sight of. Surely a Christian cannot require a particular kind of "poetics", only a true one – which must mean something, however laconic, that keeps close to the poetic material. Edwards's chapter on Eliot – which, unlike the others, is in the form of notes rather than of consecutive discourse – does this at least intermittently: how closely one judges it to do so must depend on the view one takes of the *Four Quartets*.

Bishop Butler, who was no mean performer as a writer of analytical prose – itself an important branch of literature – says in the *Analogy*, as John Coulson reminds us, that "Religion is a practical thing." So is literature, for those who practise it; so, above all, is poetry, for the poet.

Pythagoras' other theorem

Brian Pippard

H.F. COHEN  
Quantifying Music: The science of music at the first stage of the Scientific Revolution, 1580-1650  
308pp. Dordrecht: Reidel. Dfl 145.  
9027716374

What Moses is to the Law, Pythagoras is to the theory of music; to him tradition ascribes the discovery that consonant pairs of notes, giving pleasure when sounded together, have frequencies (as we should now put it) in simple numerical ratio – 2 for the octave, 3/2 for the fifth, 4/3 for the fourth etc. All but one of the scientists discussed in *Quantifying Music*, from Kepler to Huygens in the years 1580-1650, started from this basic result and tried to find a reason for it. Only Simon Stevin seems to have questioned the Pythagorean principle, but he had discovered fractional indices in arithmetic and was more concerned to promote his consequent invention of equal temperament. It was probably a help that his ear was rather imperfect; he shows no sign in his writing of actually enjoying music.

The question of temperament, ie, how an instrument should be tuned, runs through the whole story. There is no way the notes of an organ can be tuned so that every fifth (eg, C-G) is in the ratio 3/2, every major third (C-E) in the ratio 5/4 and so on. A good unaccompanied choir or a string quartet (it is said) adjust themselves to each chord so as to find consonance, but the piano and organ cannot, nor a fretted instrument like the lute and guitar. Stevin's suggestion, enthusiastically championed a century later by Sebastian Bach and his son Emanuel, was to make all semitone intervals equal, so that the frequency ratio for each successive semitone was the twelfth root of two, 1.0595. The ratio for the octave, of twelve semitones, is then 2, as required by Pythagoras and all that the world has to offer. This adjustment the free modulation between keys that Bach exploited in his great *Fantasias* would be impracticable – the sound would be exquisite in C major, intolerable in B. But a price has to be paid, one that Bach was prepared to pay while Helmholtz was not (or reluctantly, at best) – the major and minor thirds are mistuned to the extent of nearly 1 per cent. This would not matter if the notes were pure, without overtones, but the overtones clash unless the tuning is Pythagorean. Thus the fourth overtone of middle C (E two octaves above) and the third of E, its major third, differ in frequency by ten cycles a second in equal temperament, instead of coinciding. The trained ear can hear the fluttering due to this, and

recoils from it. Herein, says Helmholtz, is the clue to the distinction between consonance and dissonance – the Pythagorean consonances minimize the clash of overtones. Confirmation of this, for me at least, comes from setting up two tunable sources of pure notes, free of overtones. Not only do almost all intervals seem agreeable, but it is hard to adjust the notes to a simple ratio like a fifth or a third with any degree of precision. As soon as overtones are added the adjustment becomes easy.

But there is a snag, which the principals in the book under review were well aware of, but tried to ignore. In Pythagorean terms the interval of a fourth (C-F) is an excellent consonance, to be preferred to the major and minor thirds. Yet this preference is utterly rejected by practical musicians. At the time when the learned were chanting their plain songs with the addition of parallel fifths and fourths, a sturdy folk-music in Wales and Northumbria, as still survives today, was adding thirds to tunes in the major mode, in blatant disregard of theoretical preferences. And it was the major scale and the thirds, probably widespread among the profane, that survived to form the basis of classical music, to say nothing of pop styles which retain the third when almost all else is jettisoned.

Can we see in Kepler, Galileo, Mersenne and Huygens, as well as (dare I say?) in Helmholtz, too great a devotion to the mathematical ideals of Pythagoras and an overdevelopment of the analytical ear? Most listeners, and many composers, I suspect, are simply unable to hear beats between overtones until their attention is directed to them, and are prepared to tolerate a degree of mistuning. The smooth beauty of perfect tuning is a bonus, to be sure, but not the prime virtue of a performance. I think one must look beyond arithmetic, perhaps to the physiology and psychology of hearing, perhaps to anthropology, to discover why the third is so beautiful for Westerners, while the fourth is simply in terms of two notes at a time. For example, does the abominable tritone (C to F sharp, or D to A sharp) become tolerable, indeed positively pleasurable to dwell on, when two are combined into a diminished seventh?

One thing I feel confident about is that nothing written by the authors whom H.F. Cohen discusses has the smallest relevance to the problem. They were attempting to apply to music the mathematical analysis they had found so fruitful in astronomy and dynamics, but they knew virtually nothing of the physics of sound and their theories were largely misconceived. The pre-scientific writers, including Kepler, were drawn towards Pythagorean

number mysticism and would see hints of the world's harmony in everything. In reaction the early scientists developed a theory of coincidences which in favourable circumstances could have evolved into Helmholtz's theory. But in its primitive form it was too flawed to survive while the physical theory of sound was slowly being constructed. Helmholtz in 1862 ignores this early work altogether, but is full of praise for the insights of Rameau, a true musician. Perhaps a scientist may be permitted to remark that the relation of science to music is not unlike that of philosophy of science to science itself – ultimately it is the practitioner who understands what is really going on.

I cannot accept Dr Cohen's claim that her work is a significant contribution to the philo-

sophy of science, as a fully documented example of a "theory replacement". The replacement involved is of a tentative scientific speculation replacing the musical equivalent of astrology, hardly parallel to, say, Lavoisier's confident overthrow of the phlogiston hypothesis, which was itself a scientific speculation. It is difficult to see who should be recommended to read the book other than specialists in the history of early science who may find aspects of the lives of their subjects that they were unaware of. The hybrid scientist-musician may, like me, be stimulated to think afresh about the relation between his two interests, but it is a hard way of going about the business, and I wish the material had found a home instead in the pages of a learned journal.

Elizabethan experiments

Wilfrid Mellers

WALKER CUNNINGHAM  
The Keyboard Music of John Bull  
274pp. Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press  
(distributed in the UK by Bowker). £37.75.  
0835714667

Though not the greatest, John Bull is in some ways the most fascinating of the brilliant galaxy of English composers who were Shakespeare's contemporaries. He was born about the same year as Shakespeare (1563-4), and died in 1628, in foreign parts. His character belies his name, for nothing could be more remote from the stocky, rubicund John Bull of eighteenth-century convention. The Elizabethan Bull – to judge from the striking portrait in the Oxford Examination Schools – was long, lean, pale, fiery-eyed. His reputation was legendary both for learning and for virtuosity; and that he should have been mainly a composer for keyboards at a time when the mainstream of organ or virginals lent itself readily to harmonic, rhythmic and figurative experiment. Until now the only book on Bull has been a biography by Leigh Henry, prompted to near-Hollywoodian fictional excess by the haze of rumour that surrounds Bull's life. Walker Cunningham redresses the balance, producing a work of formidable scholarship which eschews speculation not only about Bull's ambiguous activities as musician, churchman, lover and possible diplomat, but also about his (demonically possessed, some said) prowess as a virtuoso and a creator of distinctively quixotic music.

The bulk of the book is taken up with sorting out, if not denaring it, the chaos of the sundry manuscript versions of Bull's works, adjudicating between them, deciding on their authenticity. This is well done and needed doing, though there will probably never be a definitive canon of Bull's works since he was so uncanonical a character. Cunningham also offers an account of all the more significant pieces, describing their structure, the number of strains a pavane contains, the nature of the variations on it, the possible origins of each type of figuration, English, Flemish or Italian, derived from this or the other composers, notably Cornet and Sweelinck. This is labour not to be sniffed at, though it tells us nothing about the musical personality of Bull himself. Clearly it is not that Cunningham is insensitive to Bull's music. He occasionally allows a "beautiful", a "lovely" or an "inspired" to escape his lips while making no attempt to tell us in what the beauty, loveliness or inspiration consists.

He has a fine, illuminating paragraph, triggered off by the (documentable) phenomenon of seventeenth-century melancholy, on Bull's "Melancholly Pavane", and is appropriately awed by the extraordinary (his word) qualities of the visionary in *Nomine* in 11.4. What falls to come over is a sense of the composer's uniquely Bullish qualities, which fuse grandeur with quirky fantasticality in ways that recall the prose of Donne's sermons or, at moments when he's weird rather than inspired, the medley of myth, medieval theological lore and modern pseudo-science typical of Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*. The man who composed that "extraordinary" *In Nomine*, the luxuriantly complex "Walsingham" variations,

the exuberantly extrovert "King's Hunt" and the passionately introvert chromatic "Pavane and Galliard" in memory of Queen Elizabeth, also wrote those intimate little autobiographical pieces with tunes as guilelessly beguiling as folk-songs – of which "Bull's Goodnight" is the most deeply touching. He also wrote less convincing but startlingly exploratory pieces such as the notorious chromatic Hexachord Fancy (on the technicalities of which Cunningham hedges his bets), not to mention many passages of self-indulgent keyboard pyrotechnics and tediously elaborated technical ingenuities which Cunningham justifiably, if schoolmasterishly, reproves. Though these emotional and intellectual contradictions endemic to Bull's music are mysterious, they are not beyond the reach of critical analysis. Cunningham says nothing about them except that they exist, and his decision, if regrettable, is respect-worthy as well as respectable. His book provides material indispensable to the critical assessment of Bull's significant place in our and

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individual and communal, and which is still necessary and available to believers of a later age. Their hymns, and those of their contemporaries, strike a chord as Johnson grudgingly admitted of Gray's *Elegy*, that comes home to the business and bosom of everyman.


In congratulating the compilers of the new Methodist hymn book, I (perhaps I might say we) "rejoice to concur with the opinion of the common" worshipper, not only with regard to the ancient hymns of the Church, the great works of the eighteenth-century Non-conformists, the fervent romanticism of the nineteenth-century believers (it is sad not to find Baring-Gould's "Now the day is over" included here), but to those modern successors who have, in spite of fashion, expressed their faith in such a way as to provide today's congregations with some assurance that the tradition of congregational praise and affirmation is not dead.

No one reading any of these three books can fail to recognize the influence of Protestantism and its most powerful popular contribution to devotion. It is good to remind ourselves, too, of the simply literary importance of hymnology. For this is a popular poetry; however sophisticated, however literary, its intention was always to appeal to the many, and, in the most aristocratic periods, its purpose was to command the widest audience. Poetry has ceased to make this claim in the present age. We think of the eighteenth century as another age of élitism, when it needed a later Wordsworth to ask for the language of poetry to be the language of ordinary men. But the hymn writers thought of this before him. One of Charles Wesley's most beautiful poems might be a chapbook celebration of devotion in its simplicity; at the same time it has the sophistication of genius in its statement of the relation of the creature to its Creator. Wesley's language, as always, is simple; his meaning profound; his poetic instinct, of economy, in imagery, in understanding, perfect. Whoever reads this poem (or sings this hymn) has touched on a vision of human experience which

On the mean altar of my heart  
There let it to thy glory burn  
With leaping flames of love,  
And trembling to its source return.  
In humble prayer and fervent praise,  
Jesus, confirm my heart's desire  
To work, and speak and think for thee,  
Still let me guard the holy fire,  
And still let up the gift in me –  
Ready for all thy perfect will,  
My acts of faith and love repeat,  
Till death thy endless mercies seal,  
And make the sacrifice complete.

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This account of the needs of the spirit is the widest-rauling of Ignatius's meditations, and can be regarded as the centre of gravity of the book as a whole. The technique of meditative evocation rather than linear argument makes it difficult sometimes to catch his drift and to see where his explorations are taking him. As it moves from Augustine to Marx, from prelapsarian sex to political economy, the discussion is held together only by the author's determination not to be enticed away by familiar platitudes from the honesty of his initial insight that the worth of life is expressed in the first instance always "in the unmistakable coinage of sensation". For my money, that establishes his *bona fides* in an area of discussion too often distinguished by pedantry and cant.

**RONALD D. MILO**  
**Immortality**  
274pp. Guildford; Princeton University Press.  
£34.70.  
0691066140

**MARY MIDDLEBY**  
**Wickedness: A philosophical essay.**  
224pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £14.95.  
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**JUDITH N. SHKLAR**  
**Ordinary Vices**  
268pp. Harvard University Press. £13.20.  
067564175 2

This assessment would be reinforced by the predilection for amusing but imaginary cases, as though the larger moral issues had all been resolved, leaving as exercises for moral philosophy only abstract problems in remote possible worlds. So one may properly wonder whether there has not been some underlying shift in philosophical sensibility when three books appear at nearly the same time, the concatenated titles of which — *Wickedness, Immorality, and Ordinary Vices* — seem to define a core curriculum for those curious to learn

*"Bradford 1978", reproduced from volume seven in "The Great Photographers" series, Donald McCutlin by Mark Haworth Booth (62pp with 48 pages of black-and-white-plates. Collins. £3.95. 000 411935 5).*

Words like fraternity, belonging, and community are so soaked with nostalgia that they are nearly useless as guides to the real possibilities of solidarity in modern society. Modern life has changed the possibilities of civic solidarity, and our language stumbles behind

With its 154 pages, *The Needs of Strangers* must be one of the shortest books ever published on human needs. It can easily be read in an evening. But the learning that underlies the reflections it provokes are worth more time than that. It is not a book that argues cogently to any conclusions. Though there are themes I have not mentioned, none of them followed through with any greater rigour than the lines of argument I have indicated. But I do not think that is a fault, and I hope that *The Needs of Strangers* will be the starting point for a wider and more mature discussion of the social problem of need than we have had up to now.

Against family opposition Camille Claudel did receive some tuition, from the sculptor Alfred Boucher, and left home to share a studio with other art students. When Boucher went to study in Italy he handed over his classes to Auguste Rodin, then in his forties and not yet the great celebrity he was to become. It was Camille Claudel's association with Rodin that was to bring about all the success and tragedy of her life.

Although she was his mistress for some dozen years, it is not just the story of a broken love affair. As the illustrations show, her fine and sensitive work is remarkably Ilka Rodin's, and the question of who plagiarized whom was to become of sinister importance. She was in fact working in this style before she ever met Rodin. When she presented examples of her

**REINE-MARIE PARIS**  
Camille Claudel 1864-1943  
383pp. Paris: Gallimard. 330 fr  
2070110753

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**ADRIENNE CORRI**  
The Search for Gainsborough  
278pp. Cape. £8.95.  
0224 021621

Adrienne Corri's *The Subject of the* is the case-history of one such obsession. It recounts her year-long battle to establish that a painting in the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, is of Garick and by the young Gainsborough. Her inquiry follows the clues of course; the "signature" T.G. is found on canvas and matched with one in the *Vermeer*, which is certainly a figment of the imagination. It is puzzling to find that the amateur art-historian is always desperately anxious to get professional to agree with him, yet treats measure of disagreement with utter contempt. The relentless pressure on the official national museums to abjure their beliefs is articulated in Mrs. Corri's record of her ac-

From the time of the break, Camille Claudel's life took a downward direction; as Rodin rose, she sank. She was short of money for materials, and was difficult about exhibitions. Her family, in particular her mother, was estranged from her and ashamed of her "imbecile" life. Her father, however, had a tolerant persecution complex about "sieur Rodin" and his supposed gang of accomplices who were out to plagiarize and rob her. Eventually she broke up with hammers all the work she had done since 1905 and had the fragments taken away and buried.

If restitution can be made to Camille Claudel, this book does make it, and the fine photographs of her work display its calibre. Reine-Marie Paris makes it clear that Camille Claudel's obsession with the idea that Rodin had plagiarized from her was not, in a sense, delusory; she had offered herself and her gifts freely to him and there was no getting them back. She was both his muse and right hand for years, and there was something in her own way of sculpting that showed him the way he should go to himself. The author writes that, although she was working intensely hard. "Unfortunately, some of her works are housed in the Rodin museum, though after the break she refused to appear in the same exhibitions with him. They should be placed somewhere where they can have a life of their own."

**AUGUSTERODIN**  
**Art: Conversations with Paul Gsell**  
 Translated by Jacques de Caso and Patricia B  
 Sanders  
 130pp. University of California Press. £13.80.  
 0520038193

supersitively footnoted and indexed. It is certainly more faithful than its only predecessor by Mrs Romilly Fadden, which somehow managed both to edit and to be more long-winded than the original. Next to nothing is known about the precise terms of the collaboration between Rodin and Gsell; one is occasionally tempted to read the book as if it were fiction. Gsell often seems to be carried away by his own rhetoric, and a number of the ideas voiced are striking nineteenth-century commonplace. Some of their possible sources ranging from Balzac and Gautier to Amiel to (as de Caso suggests in his useful introduction) Bergson. (Later French editions contain a "Testament", signed by Rodin, which often seems even more tellingly Bergsonian.) The work of pin-pointing these sources and assessing the originality of Rodin and Gsell's ideas, embedded as they necessarily are in "the major intellectual themes of the time" (Symbolist spiritualism, late-nineteenth-century neo-classicism *symbolisme*, *néo-classicisme*) is now made available to us. Conceived in a journalistic form which was common at the period, the book is the work of a gifted popularizer and conveys the supreme self-assurance of the artist and the consistency of his thought in a way that pushes worries about its literal veracity into the background.

Rodin expressed himself with authority of Nature and Realism, the role of intellect in art, the Old Masters, the social utility of the artist and on women. He provides valuable insight into his working methods, his approach to the model in movement and his changing conceptions of drawing. He gives us background information on important commissions and offers illuminating observations on eighteenth and nineteenth-century French art, on Houssier and Rude, Watteau, Delacroix and Millet, the artist he admired. The book is one of the freshest attempts at explaining his craft to any successful modern artist has made. "The body always expresses the spirit for which it is the shell", Rodin said, and beautifully illustrates the depth of this insight in his conversation on Phidias and Michelangelo. We, however, need not only what Rodin has to tell us in this book, but also our own critical and historical wits, in order fully to comprehend the spirit behind his striding, crushing, crouching and dismembered bodies: to disclose the extent to which Rodin's thought is embedded not merely in contemporary themes; but also in contemporary values.

Unless the painting in question catches the collector's eye, the future reader will have the greatest difficulty in forming his own opinion on the dispute. This book makes publishing history by not containing a single plate illustrating the picture which is its topic, still less any related material. The only reproduction on the dust jacket, which is designed to be ephemeral. Weighing its vitality against its defects, my view of her book is summed up in Miss Corr's description of a hotel which does not meet her standards: "Terrible! I rather like it".

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further". Nevertheless he does return to his speculations and on his deathbed it is in philosophy, not baggammon, that he locates the worth of his life. Again, we see Hume facing death with Stoic self-command, repudiating the spiritual consolations that Boswell urges on him. Yet on his own account in his work on "natural religion", such self-command is not generally to be expected in mankind, for man is an animal unreconciled to the needs of his nature and cursed with the capacity to distance himself from them in thought and to try and "make them bearable by compassing them in meaning, in the language of Providence, or the mythology of original sin". Yet again, with Adam Smith, Hume finds in mundane need ("hunger, thirst, and the passion for sex") a secular basis for social order and a motor for economic and historical progress that his predecessors had found only in an ethic "grounded in the idea that we owe an account of the stewardship of our lives to our Master". But both thinkers recognized that a society built on this basis still requires at the very least a common language of need for its members, one that must arise out of reflection on our natures, rather than individual immersion in material desire.

This account of the needs of the spirit is the widest-ranging of Ignatieff's meditations, and can be regarded as the centre of gravity of the book as a whole. The technique of meditative evocation rather than linear argument makes it difficult sometimes to catch his drift and to see where his explorations are taking him. As it moves from Augustine to Marx, from prelapsarian sex to political economy, the discussion is held together only by the author's determination not to be enticed away by familiar platitudes from the honesty of his initial insight that the worth of life is expressed in the first instance always "in the unmistakable coinage of sensation". For my money, that establishes his *boundaries* in an area of discussion too often distinguished by pedantry and cant.

Towards the end of the book, two further themes emerge: belonging and modernity. The need to belong and the special plight of the refugee have already been touched on in the argument about social and natural needs. If our claims against one another are strongest in systems of social obligation that bind needs and entitlements together, and weakest on the heath where the rights of man are so many words in the wind, then the need for ties of family, community, and a state of one's own takes on the urgency and (in the case of national liberation movements) the "murderous intensity" of the most compelling human aspiration. But there is also a deeper, non-instrumental significance in the need to belong. Though we value individual freedom we do not normally feel that it amounts to much if exercised in isolation from the understanding and recognition of others. We need the backdrop of a common culture, ethics and historical



"Bradford 1978", reproduced from volume seven in "The Great Photographers" series, Donald McCullin by Mark Haworth Booth (62pp with 48 pages of black-and-white plates. Collins. £3.95. 0004119355).

## Going to the bad

**RONALD D. MILO**  
Immortality  
274pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press.  
£24.70.  
0691 066140  
**MARY MIDGLEY**  
Wickedness: A philosophical essay  
224pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £14.95.  
07100 9759X  
**JUDITH SHKLAR**  
Ordinary Vices  
268pp. Harvard University Press. £13.20.  
0675 641752

Like Stendhal, so he tells us, Nietzsche insisted, as a stylist, to be *seen*. It must be admitted that he reached *dehors* at best; for a degree of dryness surpassing even *brut*, one must look to those who have written on moral issues under the rhetorical imperatives of analytical philosophy. So concerned have these authors been never to be suspected of edificatory intentions that one could not deduce from their examples that misconduct ever gets much worse than rudeness, or that moral weakness leads to negligences worse than not brushing one's teeth or, at the very worst, to excesses beyond helping oneself to an unfairly large portion of dessert at high table. I have often thought that were the corpus of contemporary moral philosophy all that remained as literary evidence for the life of our era, archaeologists of the future would enviously conclude that we had lived in a golden age.

This assessment would be reinforced by the predilection for amusing but imaginary cases, as though the larger moral issues had all been resolved, leaving as exercises for moral philosophy only abstract problems in remote possible worlds. So one may properly wonder whether there has not been some underlying shift in philosophical sensibility when three books appear at nearly the same time, the concatenated titles of which—*Wickedness*, *Immortality*, and *Ordinary Vices*—seem to define a core curriculum for those curious to learn

the usual arenas of Anglo-American moral theory—the garden party, say, or the dinner-table. Can it be, Nietzsche would ask in his unmistakably *liquoreux* way, that philosophers are learning at last what we human-all-too-humans knew all along?

The title of Ronald D. Milo's subtle and systematic book is perhaps misleadingly incendiary, inasmuch as his concern is more—to use his distinction—with moral wrongness than moral *badness*, which is where immortality would seem to begin, and his main aim seems to be to typologize the modes of moral wrongness more adequately to our concept of it than Aristotle succeeded in doing. Aristotle allowed just two possibilities: "wickedness", where one acts on wrong principles thinking them right, and which is therefore a cognitive defect; and "weakness", where one acts wrongly notwithstanding one's knowledge of what right principles command. So far so good, but moral weakness or *akrasia* was recognized by Plato, as indeed by Euthyphides, whose *Medea* was written in refutation of Socrates' bold thesis. Professor Milo goes considerably beyond anything allowed in theory by the ancients, proposing three sources of moral wrongness: bad values believed by an agent to be good (*perverse wickedness*) or acknowledged as bad but acted on anyway since the agent prefers some end more than that of avoiding wrong-doing (*preferential wickedness*); lack of concern for others, either by not making moral judgments at all (*amoral*), or making them but not letting that interfere with one's actions (*moral indifference*); and finally lack of rational self-control, which subdivides as *moral negligence* and *moral weakness*, depending upon whether emotions distort one's judgment, or leaving one's judgment unaffected, nevertheless keep one from doing the right thing. To each of these he devotes a careful chapter.

It seems to me that each dimension of moral failure might be exemplified through the standardly tepid or exotic cases contemporary moral

philosophy standardly deals in, so something else is needed to carry us to the boundaries of true wickedness. Milo insists that he is not writing a system of ethics, where perhaps the distinction between wrongness and badness properly belongs, and so it may be unreachable from the widened platform of meta-ethical analysis he has given us, even if the latter may have some empirical fall-out and some ethical implications. So the reader will only by accident achieve much by way of homiletical insight from the refined taxonomies. At one point, for example, we are offered the thesis that lack of moral concern may be "the single, ultimate source of all immoral behaviour". This sounds as though indifference were the *summum malum*, which it may be. But more than meta-ethics is wanted to show why it should be the ultimate evil, if it is that: Milo's interest merely lies in showing it to be more basic than the other distinctions, in the sense that they may be reduced to it. This is the reverse of those ancient queries as to whether the cardinal virtues may not be reduced to one, and the book remains well within the standard preoccupations of analytical moral inquiry.

As much must be said of Mary Midgley's stridently titled and more roughly composed essay, less concerned with identifying evil than with ruling out certain explanations of its existence—as God's fault for not having made us better, or society's fault for having framed us as we are. Wickedness does not figure largely in the text—there is no entry for it in the otherwise adequate index—and my sense is that the title was an afterthought to what seems like a hastily compiled discussion of motives and the conflict of motives. Midgley calls for rather more subtlety in the analyses of moral psychology than she anywhere displays herself, her chief target being the view that moral badness is a matter of pursuing one's own interest; whatever the cost to others, which is preferential wickedness in Milo's scheme. More is involved in immorality than egoism, more, even than the perversion of natural desires, since even natural-unperverted desires conflict morally being a mechanism for harmonization. Since, as she contends, the initial desires

Words like fraternity, belonging, and community are so soaked with nostalgia that they are nearly useless as guides to the real possibilities of solidarity in modern society. Modern life has changed the possibilities of civic solidarity, and our language stumbles behind

like an overburdened porter with a mountain of old cases.

No doubt Ignatieff exaggerates when he warns that a need can die altogether for want of linguistic expression. If that were literally true, there would be no problem. The worry is that we are haunted by a living but unarticulated need, and that, until we find words for it, we will be unable to pursue any credible social strategy for its satisfaction.

The suggestion in the final pages of the book is that we should turn for such a language to the art and literature of modernity. Drawing heavily on Marshall Berman's work, *All That Is Solid Melts into The Air*, Ignatieff writes of "the proximity of loneliness and happiness" and the dialectic of rootlessness and belonging, which can be found in modern cities—in their boulevards, bars and diners. Laments about the alienation and transience of modern life are dismissed as easy options; they would be helpful only if there were a real possibility of a return to stable and homely forms of solidarity. The author's own suggestions are tantalizingly brief but, based as they are on the premise that that possibility does not exist, they express an optimism that there is still somewhere to look for a sense of belonging adequate to the restless joys and fleeting contact of the society of strangers in our cities.

With its 154 pages, *The Needs of Strangers* must be one of the shortest books ever published on human needs. It can easily be read in an evening. But the learning that underlies it and the reflections it provokes are worth more time than that. It is not a book that argues cogently to any conclusions. Though there are themes I have not mentioned, none of them is followed through with any greater rigour than the bores of argument I have indicated. But do not think that is a fault, and I hope that *The Needs of Strangers* will be the starting point for a wider and more mature discussion of the social problem of need than we have had up till now.

impose limits on reconciliation, some degree of evil may be unavoidable. Midgley really is a moralist by temperament, if an analyst by persuasion, and the book seems an uneasy compromise between impulses too held in check by one another to have allowed a very penetrating study: perhaps the book illustrates what it is about.

Montaigne is the hero of Judith Shklar's book, and in a way her model, for these are essays much in the manner of Montaigne, on the ordinary vices he identified: cruelty, hypocrisy, snobbery, betrayal and misanthropy. As suits a proprietor at Chateau d'Yquem, Montaigne had no special concern to be *acc*, and he expresses repugnance and enthusiasm freely, just as Professor Shklar herself does in what she describes as "a tour of perplexities, not a guide for the perplexed". I saw an earlier version of the initial essay, "Putting Cruelty First", and I greatly admired her observation that cruelty, the worst of vices, is scarcely to be found much discussed in the pages of traditional moral philosophy—evidently in this respect not to be preferred to the recent kind—and is not counted in the standard inventory of viciousness. I looked into Hasting's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* to see if this could be true. Under "Cruelty" the reference work directed us only to look under "Inhumanity", where I found chiefly a discussion of cruelty to animals, as though it were not to be found in our relations with one another.

We need a Foucault to archaeologize an absence—of discussion of cruelty—which may be the most interesting fact in the history of moral thought. Shklar's treatment of it is the best of her essays, but like them, and in the nature of "tours", it wanders in and out of literature and politics, following the pen, as it were. These are civilized excursions, literate and sensitive, and I cheer the book for its effort to move us out of the metaleogues and into the heart of darkness. Once we acknowledge the ordinariness of ordinary vices, the banality of normal badness, we may find ourselves out of distance from the moral monsters of human history who may simply be us, writ large.

## Sieur Rodin's victim

Rosemary Dinnage

REINE-MARIE PARIS  
Camille Claudel 1864-1943  
383pp. Paris: Gallimard. 330 fr.  
2.070110753

The life of Camille Claudel, as told in this beautifully produced French book, makes an appalling story. She was born into a bourgeois French family in 1864, sister of Paul Claudel the writer, who compared the family atmosphere to that of *Wuthering Heights*. Her mother, as was only too clearly shown later on, disliked her, and her ambition to sculpt was frowned on. A photograph of her at twenty shows a handsome dark girl with a stubborn lift of the chin.

The life-story is based on meagre materials, for everything about her fell into a tragic obscurity even while she was still living; important letters, such as those to her father and to Rodin, are missing. Of her sculpture, everything she produced after 1905 was destroyed by her own hand, and what exists is mainly dispersed in private collections and obscure provincial galleries. The biography is filled out by an article on her work (dated 1905) by her brother, an essay on her relation to Paul Claudel's writing by Bernard Howells of King's College, London, an assessment by two psychiatrists, and a catalogue, list of exhibitions and bibliography. The author is Paul Claudel's granddaughter.

Against family opposition Camille Claudel did receive some tuition from the sculptor Alfred Boucher, and left home to share a studio with other art students. When Boucher went to study in Italy he handed over his classes to Auguste Rodin, then in his forties and not yet the great celebrity he was to become. It was Camille Claudel's association with Rodin that was to bring about all the success and tragedy of her life.

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work to the head of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, he asked her if she had been taking lessons from Monsieur Rodin. At that time she had never heard of him.

Through her twenties and early thirties she was most closely associated with Rodin as model, lover and pupil, and he undoubtedly helped her career greatly. They exhibited together and he introduced her to a circle of artists and writers. He was the established artist, she the disciple. Whether he also learnt from her and whether she did work that was passed off with his signature can never be finally decided, but it was at the core of the persecutory beliefs that led to her imprisonment as a mental patient.

Rodin was a famous—or infamous—pursuer of women, but the long liaison with Claudel was in a different class from his transitory affairs. While he was with her he did some of his best work. There was yet another woman in the background, however, the mistress who had been an unmarried wife to him since he was young and unknown. She was extremely jealous of Camille; Rodin, though, was unwilling to jettison his first and faithful companion. There were rumours at the time that Camille Claudel had a child or an abortion or both. When the relationship broke up, she withdrew into eccentricity and solitude. There is a striking parallel here with the life of Gwen John, who was also model and mistress of Rodin as well as a brilliant artist. Her tum came later, when Rodin was elderly, but she was broken by the ending of the affair and lived in a more and more reclusive fashion, devout, surrounded by cats, working obsessively. Fortunately Gwen John had no family in France to put her in an asylum.

From the time of the break, Camille Claudel's life took a downward direction; as Rodin rose, she sank. She was short of money for materials, and was difficult about exhibitions. Her family, in particular her mother, was estranged from her and ashamed of her "immoral life". Unlike her devoted brother, however, she was working intensely hard. Ironically, some of her works are housed in the Rodin museum, though after the break she refused to appear in the same exhibitions with him. They should be placed somewhere where they can have a life of their own.

## On the track of TG

Graham Reynolds

ADRIENNE CORRI  
The Search for Gainsborough  
278pp. Cape. £8.95.  
0224 021621

Pursuit by fanatics is an occupational hazard in any art gallery. It seems as though behind every portrait of "Ignatio" by Anonimo there is an owner who is convinced that it is of Shakespeare by Tintoretto—though never of Plato Mr Smith by plain Mr Brown. Such shakeable beliefs can go with normality in other aspects of life; even Mr Dijk was thought by Betsey Trotwood to have exceptional mental resources in spite of his King Charles's head. Obsessions about authorship are frequently supported by the detection of secret or concealed signatures. A collector of the 1930s was sure that all his drawings of male nudes were by Michelangelo because the genitals always spelt out the monogram M.

Adrienne Corri's *The Search for Gainsborough* is the case-history of one such obsession. It recounts her six-year battle to establish that a painting in the Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, is of Gainsborough and by the young Gainsborough. Her inquiry follows the classic canons of the "signature". T.G. is found on the canvases and matched with one in the V&A which is certainly a fragment of the imagination. It is puzzling to find that the amateur art-historian is always desperately anxious to get the professional to agree with him, yet treats any measure of disagreement with utter contempt. The relentless pressure on the officials of national museums to abjure their beliefs is exemplified by Miss Corri's record of her activi-

ties. The Director of the National Portrait Gallery has to reply to six letters to one year alone, though he can only repeat the opinion he first formed after careful consideration. In extreme cases it may be necessary to leave the country for protracted periods; how well we can understand the feelings of Sir Ellis Waterhouse as he writes that he is just leaving for Los Angeles and that no mail will be forwarded.

Miss Corri relates her remorseless investigation in detail and in a highly entertaining manner: her lively powers of description suggest that she has a promising future as a novelist. She is especially good on the gossip-colourist's world of mink coats, Jean Muir dresses and champagne. I enjoyed her reports of the rehearsals of *Keon* and similar stage events; but perhaps others with more inside knowledge of the theatre will find these as misleading as I do her accounts of the art world. Indeed she has already embarked on her career as a fiction writer in her assessments of museums and their staff. Her good angels are Arthur Lucas, Sir Hugh Casson, Lord Olivier, Tom Keating; these agree with her or urge her back into the fray. "Do you want me to twist John Hayes' arm again?" asks Sir Hugh. Posterily may think that the adverse opinions, based on long and varied experience, of Sir Oliver Miller, John Hayes, Malcolm Cormack, John Kerslake, John Ingham are more worthy of consideration. Only Waterhouse, no doubt wearying of the chase, writes a carefully worded letter which, though it would not persuade a Board of Trustees to sanction a purchase, is sufficiently ambiguous for the author to be able to savour with Casson the feeling of "Victory at last".

To be fair, just as the alchemists stumbled on some aspects of modern chemistry in their

In 1913, when she was forty-eight, reality confirmed her most paranoid fantasies; she was taken by force from her studio and put in an asylum. She had been living in chaos and dirt, keeping the blinds closed and only venturing out rarely at night. It was perhaps understandable that her family should want to see her under the care of doctors for a time. But she stayed in the asylum for the rest of her life—no less than thirty years.

Letters that she wrote to family and friends begging for release are included here, and make indescribably pitiful reading. They are also completely lucid. Reports from the hospital are included as well and evidently she did continue to have persecutory ideas about food and about Rodin's "gang"; it was Rodin, she had to think, who had had her put away, for how could her family do such a thing? It is clear that she was no danger at all to herself or to others, however, and at intervals her doctors suggested that she be discharged. Her mother refused point-blank:

Je ne veux à aucun prix la relâcher de chez vous... jamais, jamais. J'ai 75 ans, je ne puis me charger d'une fille qui a les idées les plus extravagantes, qui est remplie de mauvaises intentions à notre égard, qui nous déteste et qui est toute prête à nous faire tout le mal qu'elle pourra... Enfin elle n'a tous les vices, je ne veux pas la revoir, elle nous a fait trop de mal.

Persecutory ideas seem to have been as much the mother's as the daughter's. During her whole life of incarceration neither mother nor sister ever visited her.

If restitution can be made to Camille Claudel, this book does make it, and the fine photographs of her work display its calibre. Reine-Marie Paris makes it clear that Camille Claudel's obsession with the idea that Rodin had plagiarized from her was not, in a sense, delusory; she had offered herself and her gifts freely to him and there was no getting them back. She was both his muse and right hand for years, and there was something in her own way of sculpting that showed him the way he should go himself. The author makes it clear that although she was working intensely hard, ironically, some of her works are housed in the Rodin museum, though after the break she refused to appear in the same exhibitions with him. They should be placed somewhere where they can have a life of their own.

Rodin expressed himself with authority on Nature and Realism, the role of intellect in art, the Old Masters, the social utility of the artist, and on women. He provides valuable insights into his working methods, his approach to the model in movement and his changing conceptions of drawing. He gives us background information on important commissions and offers illuminating observations on eighteenth and nineteenth-century French art, on Houdin and Rude, Watteau, Delacroix and Millet, all artists he admired. The book is one of the freshest attempts at explaining his craft that any successful modern artist has made. "The body always expresses the spirit for which it is the shell", Rodin said, and beautifully illustrates the depth of this insight in his conversation on Phidias and Michelangelo. We, however, need not only what Rodin has to tell us in this book, but also our own critical and historical wits, in order fully to comprehend the spirit behind his striding, crushing, crouching and dlamembered bodies: to discern the extent to which Rodin's thought was embedded not merely in contemporary themes, but also in contemporary values.

Unless the painting in question enters a public collection the future reader will have the greatest difficulty in forming his own opinion on the dispute. This book makes publishing history by not containing a single plate illustrating the picture which is its topic, still less any related material. The only reproduction is on the dust jacket, which is designed to be ephemeral. Weighing its vitality against its defects, my view of her book is summed up in Miss Corri's description of a hotel which did not meet her standards: "Terrible: I rather like it".

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# The cycle of repression

Martin Gilbert

**BENJAMIN PINKUS**  
*The Soviet Government and the Jews 1948-1967: A documentary study*  
 612pp. Cambridge University Press. £35.  
 0521247136

The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 seemed to offer the five million Jews of Russia limitless opportunities. All the crushing disabilities imposed upon them by the Tsars were swept away. For the first time in 150 years, Jews could live anywhere in the vast territories of European and Asiatic Russia. Their two main languages, Yiddish and Hebrew, both flourished. The very leadership of the new Bolshevik Russia was to a large extent in Jewish hands.

Whatever euphoria might have been enjoyed by the Jews in those years was swept aside under Stalin. Disabilities far worse than any of those suffered under the Tsars fell upon the Jewish spirit, both religious and secular. By 1939, Jewish parents had become afraid to tell their children anything about their precious 5,000-year-old heritage, or about the cultural and spiritual life of the previous generation.

The Soviet Union's victory over Germany in 1945, like the Revolution of 1917, seemed once more to offer Soviet Jews an end to indignities and repression. Jewish soldiers, sailors and airmen had fought heroically in every war zone, rising to the highest ranks of command. Jewish partisans had been active behind the Nazi lines. After so much slaughter, and the murder of at least two million Jewish civilians on Soviet soil, the survivors hoped that Jewish suffering under the Nazis, and the Jewish contribution to the Soviet war effort, would combine to bring them better times.

This was not to be; the way the bad times returned with a vengeance is clearly seen in 173 documents published in this volume by Ben-

jamin Pinkus. The documents bring the story of Soviet Jewry almost to the eve of their third moment of hope, the opening of the gates of emigration in 1971 which was followed by the departure of 250,000 Jews in less than a single decade. To all intents and purposes, these gates are now closed, and Jewish emigration has again been brought to an abrupt end.

Dr Pinkus has written a scholarly and thought-provoking book. Nearly a hundred pages of reference notes testify to his dedication. The story which the documents tell is one of persistent harassment, repression, execution and, in the last years of Stalin's rule, the threat of mass deportation to Siberia: a systematic and at times bloody campaign against Jewish identity and self-expression.

Although at Yalta in February 1945 Stalin had agreed with Roosevelt and Churchill to permit the Jews to establish a national home in Palestine (a policy to which Britain had been committed since 1917), official Soviet opposition to Zionism emerged within a year. In the Soviet press, Zionism was soon being described as a movement linked to "influential American circles", as well as to "British imperialism". Two years before the establishment of the State of Israel, an article in one leading Soviet journal described the Jewish settlements in Palestine as "an instrument of racist hate, propaganda and chauvinism".

For a short period, from August 1947 to August 1948, the Soviet Government supported the establishment of Israel, but it quickly turned its back on the new State. Ironically, as Pinkus points out, this brief promulgation of a "pro-Israel" policy in Moscow was paralleled by an increasingly "anti-Jewish" policy in the internal attitudes of Soviet officialdom, characterized by the murder in January 1948 of Solomon Mikhoels, the Director of the Jewish Theatre in Moscow, and one of the most prominent figures of Soviet Jewry. This campaign culminated in the dissolution of most of the Jewish cultural institutions, followed by the

mass arrest of leading figures in the Yiddish cultural world. Arrest was followed in most cases by execution. Several hundred leading Jewish writers, actors, painters, sculptors and musicians disappeared, never to be seen or heard of again.

One of the most instructive chapters in this book is that which documents the Soviet portrayal between 1948 and 1967 of Jewish wartime suffering and resistance under the Nazis. Pinkus asserts, and gives considerable documentation to back up his assertion, that the portrayal of the Holocaust and Jewish resistance in the Soviet press "is one of the best gauges in Soviet policy on the Jewish question".

It is remarkable how quickly the fact of Jewish suffering on Soviet soil and the Jewish contribution to the Soviet war effort became a non-subject. In 1946 a substantial volume was ready for printing in Moscow. Entitled the *Black Book*, it set down documentary evidence of Nazi crimes against the Jews. In 1948, not only was it withdrawn from publication, but the type was broken up. A similar fate befell the *Red Book*, which was to have portrayed the part played by Jews in the battles fought by the Red Army as well as the previously much-mentioned Jewish contribution to resistance in Russia, both in the ghettos and in partisan units.

By 1949, the partial concealment of the Jewish contribution to wartime resistance was replaced, as Pinkus shows, by total silence. This policy was carried so far, he writes, "that any mention of Jewishness was erased from the few monuments erected after the war to the memory of the Jewish victims of the Nazis".

It was the Jews themselves who, at the very end of the period documented in this volume, began to gather at the various mass-murder sites of the Nazi era, particularly the death pits and ravines outside Vilna and Riga, and at Babi Yar in Kiev. There, these "Soviet citizens of Jewish nationality", as they are officially

designated, sought to remember the dead, to clear the sites of debris, and to demand the establishment of monuments to those who had been killed. Pinkus publishes the full text of two such demands.

It was at these memorial meetings in the 1960s that the Jewish renaissance of the 1970s was born, not only a renewal of Jewish consciousness, but a new sense of national awareness. After all, there was now a State of Israel, so that the Soviet Government's own designation of the Jews as a "nationality" stimulated first the wish and then the demand for emigration to the distant, but more fully Jewish, "national home" on the shores of the eastern Mediterranean.

With the closing down of mass emigration in 1961, many of the manifestations of Soviet anti-Jewish attitudes so painstakingly documented by Pinkus for the years 1948 to 1967 have re-emerged. Once more, Soviet publications seek to belittle the scale and nature of Jewish suffering during the war years and to cut out all reference to specific Jewish contributions to resistance. Once again, it is made extremely difficult for Jews to gather at sites such as Babi Yar for memorial meetings. But whereas the repressions so fully represented in these documents took place in a community which could see no prospect whatever of leaving the Soviet Union, today's arrests, trials and imprisonment, together with the continuing pressure on Jewish cultural life, take place against a background of roused expectation, making them all the more difficult for the individual Jew to bear.

Today's Soviet Jews have seen come to a virtual end the range of opportunities opened up during the 1970s. Many of them now fear, and Dr Pinkus's documentation would seem to suggest, that the bad times have returned yet again, and that considerable faith, hope and fortitude will be needed to see them through.

## Diminished pictures

Alan Hollinghurst

**DENTON WELCH**  
*The Journals*  
 Edited by Michael De-la-Noy  
 378pp. Allison and Busby. £14.95.  
 0850315301  
 I Left My Grandfather's House  
 156pp. Allison and Busby. £17.95 (paperback, £2.95).  
 0850316057  
**MICHAEL DE-LA-NOY**  
*Denton Welch: The making of a writer*  
 303pp. Viking. £12.95.  
 0670800562

In 1952, Jocelyn Brooke edited a selection from Denton Welch's journals. Restricted by both the danger of libel and the fear of boring or shocking his readers he included "a little over half" of the MS which Welch had compiled in school notebooks over the last six years of his short life. He also gave us only a little over half of the man. Some passages were sabotaged by discretion: "Just before we got out he said, 'I went to the — to see —' — pictures, after I had read what — said in the *New Statesman*." And on the larger scale he suppressed much of Welch's imaginative concerns — with gossip, men, old buildings and *objets de vertu*. To Welch, himself sabotaged by the cycling accident which damaged his spine at the age of twenty and left him thereafter a permanent invalid, such concerns, and their record in the journals, were of heightened, emblematic significance. The *Journals* contain little that can readily be dispensed with, and Michael De-la-Noy's new complete edition, along with his biography of Welch, goes far to reconstitute the whole man.

Welch's was essentially an aesthetic sensibility. As a child and as an art student he felt constitutionally alone. The death of his mother and his accident were critical events which endorsed his isolation, his remoteness from ordinary human happiness, and the concentration of his feelings on objects, aesthetically ends. Though he observed people closely he was careless and exploitative of them, until his affair with Eric Oliver which surprised him in the last years of his life; the passions of the *Journals* are narcissistic and devoted to the exploration of himself and his sensibility. Physically damaged, lame, impotent, bedridden for weeks on end, Welch clung to the fragile endurance of old china and glass, the poignant dereliction of eighteenth-century grottoes and plaques, the brief perfection of young men about to be "spoiled" by time or death (it was during the Second World War). "My thoughts are never on nature", he insists at the beginning of the *Journals*; they go out instead to "lovers lying on the banks, young men that are dead". So "ruinedly" "spoiled" himself, his emotions recurrently focus in this Housmanesque nexus of voyeurism and the "torturing flood" of elagiac recall.

Welch's aestheticism helped him to arrest time, which promised him for thirteen years an early and painful death, and to master experience. It was a way of seeing which crystallized and distanced events into objects for plangent contemplation: "All still to the moonlight, stifled, spun into a glass picture", he writes after learning that the local squire is dead. That this airless, miniaturizing vision was a recourse from pain and distress is repeatedly made clear in *A Voice Through a Cloud*, Welch's last, unfinished book, which deals with his accident and its aftermath. Lying in hospital, he dreams up and imaginatively inhabits houses and gardens which are like plates from books, or pictures on old china. When another patient goes for an appendectomy he sees the operation happening in his mind:

There was something so arresting about this picture of the dreaming patient and the busy surgeon cutting and sewing with blood-stained fingers that I dwelt on it until it became blindingly clear and tiny, like the jewelled diminished picture reflected in a dewdrop.

Early in the journals, ill in bed, he escapes by bringing Zoffany conversation-pieces to life, in an animation that is both delicate and grotesque, and casts himself as a little boy wandering through an Elizabethan country house:

Stamalone by the great high feather-crested bed, rubbing my cheek on the damask and brittle silver-thread hangings, running my finger along the torii-like shell and ebony cabinet which has coiled

in the damp. I am by the withered oak of the window-sill where the rust of the latch seems to grow like an orange lichen. Out over the mist-drenched garden goes my breath in a plume as I push open the shaking, faintly smoky-purple panes.

It is a passage which typically combines an intense apprehension of physical objects with a nostalgic desire for sequestration. It makes one think of Knole (near which he lived) — and hence perhaps of *Orlando* and of the literary establishment towards which he aspired. It deploys its connoisseurship to enhance and infect the writer's self-image.

Whenever he could get out (and he had periods of surprising fitness, driving, cycling and walking) Welch cruised the antique shops of the Kentish towns and villages. The *Journals* enlarge the impression in Welch's books of his fierce, almost erotic covetousness. He had a

Jocelyn Brooke's edition of the *Journals* has as its frontispiece a photograph of Welch sitting at an inlaid marble table, with candles burning in elaborate glass lustres and the corner of a baroque tapestry visible behind. It gives the impression of an altar or of the preparations for a séance (and Eric Oliver has recorded, though De-la-Noy does not, Welch's "strong, even fascinated, belief in the existence of ghosts"). Welch did the decorations for his own books, and the frontispiece to *Maiden Voyage* is evidently drawn directly from this photograph. A comparison of the two softly lit half-profiles illustrates how Welch enhanced his self-image, giving the face itself a haunted expression, and enlarging the eyes and mouth, while the details of the background tapestry are stylized into vermiculated or coralline forms. De-la-Noy detects self-disgust in the

unrecognizable today. Everywhere you went, apparently, working-class lads were stripping off their clothes and diving into rivers, and you could sit down and share your cheese and biscuits with them. Or dark young men would approach you and say significantly, "I'd do anything for a bob". The war being on, there were also soldiers — British and Commonwealth as well as American doughboys on exercises and getting drunk — and Italian and German prisoners grateful for any kindness. Drawings of some of these types, such as Eddy Link ("a half-naked baker and confectioner"), were included in the recent exhibition of Welch's pictures at Abbott and Holder; but their portraits in words are far more effective. Typically, Welch aestheticizes them, turning them into naïve or copper or bronze, or describing their café-au-lait beards, as if they were chairs. Antique-shopping in Sevenoaks he gaily mixes his two quests: "trying to find something worthy of being bought. I saw a Georgian milk-jug for 26. I saw a red-headed boy-man, dressed in red Harris tweed... like a toy."

Even so, confronting everything he most wants and most is not, his aesthetic control begins to crack. The obsession with jewelled or ceramic perfection has its underside in a passion for mud, dirt and wildness. So much deprived of physical exhilaration he would, when well, test himself to the limit, walking and cycling, sitting in the sun until he was dizzy, or in the driving rain, "reading Dorothy Wordsworth's diary until the page was soaked and almost falling to pieces". And he watched and talked (though never, it seems, did more) with an "arrestingly dirty" tractor-driver, or with "gutturally crooning" boys "paddling through the slime... running their hands harshly all over their bodies to scrape off the mud". When he takes a light from a sailor he is magnetized by his difference: "His fingers were dirty, nicotine, something from another world." It is the familiar attraction of guilt-ridden middle-class homosexuals to a life that is dirty, instinctual.

There is a telling passage in *A Voice Through a Cloud* where he recalls that on finding himself severely injured, "it seemed to me something had happened which I had expected all my life". The accident struck him as a retribution for guilt and also as a kind of fulfilment — the catalyst to his brilliant and successful career as an autobiographical writer. A comparable ambivalence can be found in all his work. In his love of the horrid, the "repellent-attractive" things he dwells on. These tendencies were stimulated by his experience of illness, incontinence, decay; but the desire to confront such things was clearly a component of his character from childhood. Often in the *Journals* he abandons the log of the present and calls up vivid episodes of his past; one such instance of emotional regression was written on the day he learnt of his father's death, but deals instead with a complex of issues about his mother. When he first learnt that she was going to die he was nine and staying with her in a hotel; and he remembers how

up through the closed windows comes the crazy, tinkling churning of a barrel-organ — "Je cherche, je cherche Tifina, Tifina, Oh Tifina!"

The music is so beautiful, and bringing with it that awful and all-enveloping depression of popular tunes. The gayer and more sprightly they are, the more evocative they seem to be of gloom and despair.

It is an incident uncannily parallel to a more famous one in the childhood of Mahler when, his father having been especially brutal to his mother, the boy rushed out into the street, where, in Ernest Jones's account, "a hurdy-gurdy... was grinding out the popular Viennese air 'Ach, du lieber Augustin'". In Mahler's opinion the conjunction of high tragedy and light amusement was from then on inextricably fixed in his mind, and the one mood inevitably brought the other with it. There are a score of differences, but it seems clear that in Welch too the neurotic precipitations of mood from pleasure to pain, gaiety to gloom, can be traced back to the psychological crises of his early life, and found their harsh embodiment in the experience of his last years.

There is an extraordinary passage (Welch's work is all extraordinary passages; he is an anthropologist of his own life) in the journal for



Denton Welch's portrait of Lord Berners as a boy dressed as Robinson Crusoe, reproduced by courtesy of Abbott and Holder, 73 Castleway, London SW13.

## On an individual people

**ALEXANDER PASTERNAK**  
*A Vanished Present*  
 Edited and translated by Ann Pasternak Slater  
 214pp. Oxford University Press. £12.95.  
 0192122258

Boris Pasternak died in 1960. Alexander, his younger brother, lived on in Moscow until 1982. The "vanished present" of these memoirs refers to the period from his birth in 1893 to 1917. So sharp was the discontinuity between the world before and after the Revolution that for him childhood and youth did not vanish slowly into the past, but remained vividly and poignantly alive.

With loving detail he re-creates the old Moscow, full of quiet, welcoming places like Dog Squares ("just two or three benches, a memorial statue or a modest fountain with its single weak jet of water trickling into a stone basin"); the Moscow where "on winter evenings the kerosene street lamps burned dim on their short, red-painted posts", and where the spectacle of the fire brigade driving full tilt down the middle of the street was surpassed only by the dramatic break-up of the ice-floes on the river during the spring thaw. Today, the ice is blown up by the military many miles above town, and the Dog Squares have all gone, replaced by imposing new avenues or by the "intestinal convulsions of overpasses, underpasses, and pedestrian subway". There is more to all this, however, than simple nostalgia. He is not sentimental about the past. The object poverty of the peasant in the village only forty miles from Moscow where the family spent the summers of 1904 and 1905 did not make him feel sad but angry and, like so many of his contemporaries, his sympathies were on the side of revolution. What distresses him at a deeper level is not so much the physical destruction of Moscow as the changes wrought in its citizens' lives. Palm Sunday Bazaar was a unique occasion because it united everyone, while the old Mushroom Market had "a family atmosphere of common interest and domestic simplicity".

Posternak children met Moscow's leading artists, and through their mother (who had given her first piano recital at the age of eight) Moscow's leading musicians. Alexander's vivid pen-portraits of Scriabin, Rachmaninov and Busoni are beautifully complemented by Leonid's pencil sketches. As a schoolboy of fifteen, he attended Isadora Duncan's opening matinee in Moscow, and in a few sentences he persuades us that her performance really was unique. Not that his interests were confined to the arts. One of the best chapters describes a flight by the pioneer aviator, Ustchkin, wearing "a finely checked, fashionable grey suit, bright yellow, square-toed American boots, and a straw boater".

Boris emerges sympathetically from these pages, as a near-model elder brother. He never abused the three years' difference in age between them, and was a helpful guide in music and literature. Yet Alexander often found him baffling (and he was not the only one). From childhood Boris "was distinguished by an in-

ordinate passion to accomplish things patently beyond his powers". If he failed, or if he was defeated in some game, he withdrew immediately into a deep and terrifying silence; the project, or the game, would never be heard of again. He interpreted such failures as "celestial signs of his own inadequacy". The discovery that he did not have perfect pitch made him abandon music completely.

Surrounded by so much family brilliance, Alexander seems determined to play down any gifts of his own. In 1898 Leonid Pasternak was illustrating Tolstoy's *Resurrection* for the magazine *Niva*. Boris, then eight, was producing a journal of his own. From the country he sent Alexander a postcard, informing him in adult, authoritative tones that his story was nearing completion, and reminding him that the two commissioned illustrations should not be delayed. "Orders for illustrations", Alexander comments characteristically, "were usually sent to me, not because my brother couldn't draw them himself, but because I couldn't write." His attempts to learn the piano and

violin ended in miserable failure, and at school he fell to the bottom of his class, incurring general disapprobation, "affecting even my brother's attitude to me, which hurt most of all". In the summer of 1911, when Boris suddenly walked out of the family's holiday home, Alexander was sent to tidy his room, and failing to recognize the mass of papers as poetry, "tidied them in piles according to size". It is left to his niece, Ann Pasternak Slater, who has written a lively introduction as well as producing a stylish translation, to point out that Alexander himself was far from untalented and became a distinguished architect.

This is a very gentle and appealing book: gentle in its pace, its sense of humour, and its attitude to family and friends. Savant years on, Alexander still worries about whether his mother resented giving up her career for the sake of husband and children, still agonizes over the chance mishaps that caused his father to abandon the major new canvas that might have marked a turning-point in his work. Yet this very gentleness is a powerful statement in its own right. Just as the modern city planners have bulldozed the peaceful old Dog Squares "where everything was scaled for the individual, not the crowd", so modern life has crushed those humane sensibilities that were characteristic of pre-Revolutionary Russia at its best.

In his anthology, *The Stalinist Legacy: Its Impact on 20th-century world politics* (551pp. Penguin. Paperback, £4.95. 0 14 022429 7), Tariq Ali sets out to "explain the origins of Stalinism and to chart its development on a global scale". Part 1, "The Roots of the Problem", includes essays by, or extracts from, the writings of, Trotsky, Christian Rakovsky, Ernest Mandel, Isaac Deutscher, Perry Anderson, Marcel Liebman and Michael Löwy; while among the essays in Part 2, "Stalinism in Crisis", are "Stalin and the Second World War" by Fernando Claudin, "How They Crushed The Prague Spring of 1968" by Josef Smrkovsky, "The Polish Vortex: Solidarity and Socialism" by Oliver MacDonald, and "Solzhenitsyn: The Witness and the Prophet" by Daniel Slomski.

## Kingsbridge, Summer Evening

So vast, these plains. And the faster the wheels revolve, the more still they appear.

And just for the moment the sun has parked itself at the head of the street, the street also is stopped. It is held by the golden spokes like an early photograph through whose brownish patina one strains to note a family likeness, my father's eyebrows or the unconscious sucking in of his lower lip.

Wagon trains instead are moving out, children are running and handkerchiefs waving through clouds of dust, while high on the umpteenth floor the office junior moves a yellow marker flag another inch across the map.

CHARLES BOYLE

John Co. 11.16



## Blowing their doughnuts

*Cutting Edge*, or back to the knife box *Mis Sharp: Ned Sherrin's anthology of wit* (261pp, Dent, 0 460 04594 6) is a collection of humorous mots by the famous in the fields of sport, politics, showbusiness, and music.

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# Smiling through

Richard Boston

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01400 74597  
TIM DOWLEY (Editor)  
Taking Off: An anthology of parodies, send-ups and imitations  
259pp. Methuen. £8.50.  
0413 524845  
BILL HARTSON and JILL DAWSON  
The Ultimate Irrelevant Encyclopaedia  
271pp. Alan and Unwin. £8.95.  
004 827111X

In the words of William Empson's reflection from Anita Loos, a girl can't go on laughing all the time. It goes for boys too, especially at this time of the year which, for a boy like I, brings not Beaujolais nouveau but the annual crop of funny books to review. My heart aches and a drowsy numbness pains my soul as I contemplate the heaps of facetiae on such subjects as (to take a few at random) climbing, fishing, penises, eccentrics, epitaphs, Australia and prep schools. Presumably they sell. It is hard to believe that they are read. They are bought and disposed of as quickly as possible, wrapped in paper with holly and bells on, and a label saying From Boris to Doris, or From Flo to Jne. They are better to give than to receive. As often as not they quickly find their proper place in the lavatory, where they can be put (in the phrase of Sir Thomas Urquhart) both to inferior and posterior uses.

Having said which, I find the pile of books in front of me much reduced. The bibliographical

but it does add a bit of tone to that part of the bookshop or library. Anyway, he can be very funny. The book consists of what James calls "postcards" sent between 1976 and 1983 from various parts of the world which, as the title indicates, he visited by air. His passion for aeroplanes doesn't cut much ice with a reader such as myself who has an equal and opposite distaste, dislike and fear of them. I felt distinctly uneasy as James took off at the beginning of each postcard, and when we arrived intact I immediately started worrying about the flight back. Reassurance was not to be found in the book's epigraph, a quatrain by the late Francis Hope, who was killed in a plane crash.

James's flights sound as uncomfortable, uneventful, repetitive and tedious as everyone else's. He has the usual means about the in-flight movies and the food, the airport waits and mix-ups, the late departures and arrivals and the jet-lag. The postcard from Biarritz begins: "The weekly Air France Caravelle to Biarritz took off from Heathrow only an hour late." The next postcard begins: "British Airways were justifiably proud of getting your correspondent to Rome only three hours behind schedule." Doubtless both statements are true, but they are so similar to one another, and to the experience of everyone else, that they hardly seem worth recording.

In his curiously defensive introduction, James says that: "To complain that modern travel has become a cliché is a cliché in itself." For James "modern travel" means flying. He takes no account of the unchallenged superiority of earth-bound transport, which has the advantage of showing the places between the points of arrival and departure. The advantage of air

*Doctor and Patients*, compiled by Dr. Dannie Abse (114pp. £3.95. 0-19-214148-1), and *Plays and Players*, compiled by Phillips Harriott (110pp. £3.95. 0-19-214147-3), are the most recent publications in the Small Oxford Books series. These pocket anthologies, lightly illustrated with old woodcuts and engravings, bring together anecdote and comment in verse and prose.

travel can be that you spend less time getting there and more time being there. But James spends hardly any time there at all. He steps off the plane, gets over his jet lag, gives a few snapshot impressions and a bit of potted history, shows off, makes a few wisecracks, and then he's back on the plane again.

These really are flying visits. I kept thinking of Captain Spaulding (or some such Groucho character), whose song went, if I remember rightly, "Hullo, I must be going, I cannot stay, I must away. I only came to say I must be going." When James visits Pauline Kael he describes the flight, eats a "superb omelette" in Miss Knel's company, hears Jimmy Giuffrè play the saxophone, and next sentence he's on the plane again. He's equally uninformative about the other celebrities he bumps into, from Kenneth Tynan to Kiri Te Kanawa: their names are dropped, and that's it. David Frost has shown the deleterious effect of too much television combined with too much flying. It would be a pity if Clive James, a far bigger and more necessary talent, should suffer the same way.

Alan Coren's *Bumf* is his umpteenth collection of his weekly pieces for *Punch*. Since I have been a fairly regular contributor to *Punch* under his editorship, my motives may be suspected if I heap praise on him. If so, then it's just too bad. Now that Perelman has gone, Michael Frayn is lost to the theatre and Woody Allen to films, Coren has no rivals as a writer of comic pieces. The blurb quotes Clive James to

## Post-Pooterings

E. S. Turner

BARRY PAIN  
The Eliza Stories  
270pp. Michael Joseph. £7.95.  
0907516394

There is a household word like the Grossmiths' Mr Pooter. In the view of many, he was funnier than Pooter, but because Pain scrupulously avoided giving him either a first name or a surname he was fatally handicapped on the road to immortality. Was this namelessness conceivably a self-denying gesture to the Grossmiths — a recognition that chronologically Pooter deserved pride of place in the comic pantheon?

Eliza's husband was cast narrator of several volumes of humorous sketches which appeared on railway bookstalls early this century. They had a big sale but were not designed to last and the literary establishment tended to scoff at them, as they scoffed at Jerome K. Jerome. Being a wag was not yet a respectable trade. W. B. Hensley advised Pain to devote

## All right all round

Christopher Hitchens

GEORGE PLIMPTON and CHRISTOPHER HEMPHILL (Editors)  
D. V. by Diana Vreeland  
196pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £9.95.  
0277 784064

Dating, what a lot of parties. . . Kabuki parties, Welmar parties, Edward VIII parties, Coco Chanel parties, Parouk parties: Diana Vreeland has trodden the measure. Thanks to the infinite patience of her two courtiers (George Plimpton of the *Paris Review*, and a Christopher Hemphill who will surely go far) we can all now, vicariously, cop the lot.

Her chroniclers obviously find *la Vreeland* irresistible — hence, perhaps, the faintly blasphemous title — so we learn a great deal about the high old days at *Vogue* and *Harpers Bazaar*, the world of Cecil Beaton and Balenciaga. We even learn some things more than once. Repetition is hard to avoid in a narrative of this kind, and it's drummed into us that the French hate to travel and that a pre-war night-gown could easily require three fittings. The

effect that Coren "has a comic imagination which can actually render your jaded scribe flabbergasted" (actually?), while the *New York Times* hails Coren as the natural heir to Thurber, but he is very like Perelman, in both his wild inventiveness and his verbal dexterity. Like Perelman his usual starting-point is in a newspaper cutting about some minor event — the opening of a hotel for phobics, the retirement of the night Head Proof Reader of the *Gazette*, a bicycle tour of France by a group of English policemen, and so on. He plunges straight into some wild flights of fancy which invariably makes you laugh while at the same time you wonder whether the joke can possibly be sustained for 2,000 words. Not only can Coren keep it up, but the piece almost always gets funnier and funnier. To produce work of such quality week after week, year after year, is a remarkable literary achievement.

John Wells's *Fifty Glorious Years* is described as a festive tribute to Margaret Hilda Thatcher. The tone is mostly that of the *Private Eye* "Dear Bill" letters, but instead of dealing with the events of the day we are taken back to the Prime Minister's formative years. At the time of Munich, "As 'wet' governments in Austria, Czechoslovakia, and Poland increasingly provoked the German government with quibbles about the exact nature of an initially German-dominated but united Europe, Margaret Hilda watched powerless. For all her efforts, war broke out." However, it was through the single-handed efforts of this Renaissance lady,

himself to serious writing, but Sir Alfred Noyes, as Terry Jones points out in his introduction to this book, said that even Pain's ephemeral work had "more genius in it than ninety per cent of the solemn 'Art' of the day".

Pain, educated at Sedburgh and Cambridge, was an Army coach (a crammer?) at Guildford

and then a householder word like the London Appeal Tribunal, presumably assessing answers by conscientious objectors to the famous question, "What would you do if you saw a German about to rape your sister?" Could he have been appointed as a recognized expert on human frailty?

The Eliza stories are brilliantly funny and defy skipping. Eliza's husband, like Pooter, is a suburbia-based City clerk. A pompous petty authoritarian, desperate to keep up appearances, fatally open to raggings, addicted to false economies, a sucker for "bankrupt sales" and patent cockroach traps, he is the sort of man who would not contemplate joining an expensive club like the Athenaeum unless they gave him satisfactory references. Convinced that his position entitles him to credit from tradespeople, he suffers accordingly. He sees himself

word "totally" recurs and recurs, as does the expression "a bit of all right", which is applied omnivorously to everything and everybody from Cole Porter to minor and major royalty.

Yet the whole, which might easily have been irritating and trivial beyond description, is almost endearing. Joyce Cary came up with the phrase "lunatic remark" to cope with those moments of crass, ineffable snobbery (coal in the bath, "I see no point in being poor"). He told me he hadn't eaten for three days and I told him he must force himself" which amount to cruelty. Diana Vreeland's version of this *argot* is not stupid or unkind, just sweetly silly. It is usually prefaced or adorned with the word "every", "nobody" or "all" (as in, "nobody is in London in August"). The Prince of Wales's ADC, "Frutty" Metcalfe, for example, "was always extremely prompt, as all Englishmen were in those days". During the fall of France, "everyone travelled with a little brandy". And Jacqueline Kennedy "has given this country such an inspiration of style, of beauty, of everything our civilization stands for" (italics mine).

But these innocent fatitudes do not have the fascinating nastiness of, say, Clive Gannon. They are as bland as the Cambridgeshire health and beauty tips with which the book is soat-

"internationally acclaimed athlete, sports-woman, political philosopher and three times winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature", that the Axis Powers were brought down in 1945. The Wilderness Years were soon followed by Power Beyond Our Wildest Dreams. Wells stuffs in a fair amount of padding to make the joke run to book length, but it's all so far over the top that a girl can go on laughing most of the time.

*Taking Off* is an anthology of parodies. It has a distinctly 1960s flavour, relying heavily on the *Beyond the Fringe*, *Private Eye*, Monty Python generation; and why not? A book that contains not only Alan Bennett's sermon on the text of "my brother Esau is an hairy man" but also Peter Sellers's "Balham, Gateway to the South" can't be all bad, and in fact is mostly very good.

*The Ultimate Irrelevant Encyclopaedia* contains a wealth of useless information. Marie Antoinette had the same bust measurement as Jayne Manafield. Anatole France had one of the smallest brains ever recorded. Most Botswana bushmen have only one testicle. Nell Kinnock's name is an anagram of "I knock Lenin", while Ken Livingstone's is "Votes Lenin king", and Konstantin Chernenko is "Another ten N. Kinnocks". The giggling commentary becomes rather wearisome, and there are too many factual errors (Sweden does not have the highest suicide rate in the world by a long way). If useless information is untrue, then it's worse than useless.

deeply wronged when his wife's mother, instead of sending a decent Christmas present, graciously returns to him a bunch of IOUs for sums he has borrowed. On the cultural level he fancies himself as a reciter and agonizes over how to arrange his features when delivering that admittedly difficult line, "Smiling, the boy fell dead".

Eliza, his delightful young wife, has lost "the silly playfulness" which sometimes characterized their courting, "and if this is due to the sobering effects of association with a steady and thoughtful character I am not displeased". She retains enough spirit and native wit to administer non-shrewish squelches.

The last batch of stories is written by the couple's son, an ill-favoured little monster who is determined not to be into doing things for nothing. As a character he goes somewhat over the top; he sheds light on, but is not quite in the same class as, his magnificent father.

All in all, these stories are professional humour at its best and were very well worth exhuming. The fun is timeless and the period flavour fly strings, silver salt-cellars, letters delivered in the evening, tonic port-wine rich in phosphates — is an extra bonus.

tered. ("I can tell you it works. Never lose sight of your gallbladder.")

Actually, my italics are almost superfluous: D. V. needs an awful lot of them to keep gushing along. As "when I say 'orange', I don't mean yellow-orange, I mean red-orange — the orange of Bakst and Diaghilev, the orange that changed the century." "Today the great variety of the world that covers the waterfront is Revlon."

There is obviously something spoilt about a person who sees the century in terms of fabrics, accessories, cuisine and captions. But there are those in many cultures, starved of all luxury or distraction, who might feel that we who are studiously careless of such things are spelt or biased also. D. V. is in no doubt where she stands. As the Nazis drove towards Paris, she met outside the Ritz "My friend Ray Goetz, the most amusing man who ever lived. He had on a blue felt hat. 'Oh Ray!' I said, 'Isn't it awful about the war?' He turned. He looked at me for just a minute — just a split second — and asked, 'What war?'"

Make what you will of that. I report merely what D. V. herself made of it; namely, "I don't think I've ever been more grateful to a human being."

## The shock-headed one

S. S. Prawer

HEINRICH HOFFMANN  
Der Struwwelpeter polygot  
Edited by Walter Sauer  
136pp. Munich: div. DM 12.80  
3423 102543  
Struwwelpeter  
24pp. Routledge and Kegan Paul. £3.95.  
07100 15348  
Struwwelpeter: Merry stories and funny pictures.  
28pp. Piccolo. Paperback. £1.25.  
0350 232827

Some years ago a contributor to *Die Zeit* amused himself by bombarding his readers with a series of sensational headlines: Neglected Child Filorried, Tormentor of Animals Bitten by Dog, Young Fire-Raiser Burnt to Death, Children Thrown into Ink-Vat, Thumb-Sucker Cruelly Maimed, Anorexic Boy Starves to Death, Daydreamer Fishes from River, Boy Disappears in Hurricane. It will not have taken German readers long to realize what game was being played; and English readers too. I am sure, will have little difficulty in translating these spoof headlines back into more familiar titles: "Shock-Headed Peter"; "The Story of Cruel Frederick"; "The Dreadful Story of Harriet and the Matches"; "The Story of the Inky Boys"; "Little Suck-a-Thumb"; "Augustus who would not have any Soup"; "Johnny Head-in-Air"; "The Story of Flying Robert". The images are still potent in Germany; the recent political scandal involving Count Lambsdorff was glossed by the *Shugartier Zeitung* with a cartoon showing a huge bearded figure dipping the count into an equally huge inkwell above the caption "Da kam der grosse Nikolaus . . .", a direct quotation from "The Story of the Inky Boys".

In England too *Struwwelpeter* has often been pressed into political service. In the 1890s Harold Begbie's *Political Struwwelpeter* began with "The Neglected Lion" in place of Shock-headed Peter himself.

See the British Lion pose  
Wildly gazing for his foes  
Who link up the laws  
Never measure his claws:  
And you will observe with pain  
No one ever crimps his mane;  
Seeing that he's so neglected  
Do you wonder he's dejected?

1914 brought E. V. Lucas's *Swollen-Headed William*, with drawings adapted by George Morrow, which placed a hydrocephalous Wilhelm II on Peter's pedestal:

Look at William! There he stands,  
With the blood upon his hands.  
His mousethreads daunt the sky,  
Puffing in his great ally.  
What of Heaven William thinks  
Is no fiddle of the Sphinx,  
But a matter much more dim  
Is what Heaven thinks of him.

The Second World War, predictably, brought a *Struwwel Hitler*, concocted in 1941 by Robert and Philip Spence, in which Goering stood in for Augustus who would not eat his soup:

Our Hermann was a chubby lad;  
Now, look of medals Hermann had.  
And all cried "Heil!" when fully dressed  
He spread them on his ample chest.  
He ate and drank up all he could  
And always found the butter good.  
But one day, one September day,  
He screamed out "Take that grease away!  
And give me glorious guns instead!  
I won't have butter on my bread!"

The part of Flying Robert was usurped, in *Struwwel Hitler*, by Rudolf Hess, who had just landed in Scotland, while Hitler, blood dripping from his hands, had the verses on Peter's pedestal adapted to suit his case, with the last couplet reading: "Pleasant never could be Hitler. Then the word of Adolf Hitler."

The anonymous Victorian translation on which all the English parodies were based, remained, and remains, in print. Booksellers report a continuing demand for it by adults who claim it gave them nightmares, yet who feel that its fascination should not be denied to their children.

It is now exactly 140 years ago that Dr. Med. Heinrich Hoffmann, who was making a reputation in his native Frankfurt for work with the poor with children, and with the mentally dis-

turbed, searched the town in vain for a picture book that he could give his four-year-old son for Christmas in the certain knowledge that the little boy would enjoy it. He returned with an empty exercise-book and set to work composing such a book himself. His father had always been fond of drawing, and had encouraged his son's amateur talent; and in his medical practice he had found that he could keep children happy while listening to their chests and looking down their throats if he kept a drawing in play. If he drew a little boy, for instance, he would lengthen his hair and nails until the picture resembled Gavioli's lithograph of the boy who had put too much hair-restorer on his head and hands: "l'enfant terrible qu'on a eu l'imprudence de laisser jouer avec un pot de Pomme de lion". That drawing became Shock-headed Peter; in the hand-written, hand-drawn and hand-coloured original it was banished to the very back of the book, as it was in the early published editions, based on lithographs commissioned by the firm of Rütten (later Rütten und Loening) and carefully supervised by the author himself. It soon proved so popular with children, however, that it was moved to the front; and a book originally entitled *Merry Stories and Funny Pictures (Lustige Geschichten und drollige Bilder)* became known the world over as *Struwwelpeter*. The original six tales had grown to ten by 1847; and when the publishers abandoned lithography in favour of woodcuts and copper engravings at the end of the 1850s, Hoffmann took the opportunity to revise his drawings and some of the rhymes, producing the version which most readers know. It is also the version with which the Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag has chosen to celebrate the 140th anniversary of the book's first appearance, supplementing the German text with Eduard Bornemann's Latin translation and with newly commissioned translations into English, French, Spanish and Italian.

The first surprise which awaits English readers when they turn to the new translation by Evan-K. Gibson in the polygot *Struwwelpeter* did not know. "The story of Shock-headed Peter" for example, (renamed "Wicked Frederick" by Mr Gibson) now ends: "The whip he hangs upon the chair / and guards it with devoted care." The second surprise comes with the names of the characters. "Good dog Tray" becomes simply "the dog", Harriet who played with matches is now "Polly", Edward and Arthur turn into "Louie" and "Casper"; and the Augustus who would not eat his soup becomes "Casper" too. In every case the new names are closer to the German. Perhaps the biggest surprise is the name of the character who punishes the three boys who mocked the blackamoors: "Then great Agrippa foams with rage; / Look at him on this very page . . ." has been so much part of child mythology in England that it comes as a shock to read, in the Gibson version, "Then Nicolas flew into a rage. / It's in the picture on this page." And that, of course, corresponds closely to the German original: "Der Niklas wurde böse und wild. - Du siehst es hier auf diesem Bild."

As his garb suggests, he is a Santa Claus who punishes as well as rewards; who plays the part, not only of the benevolent "belliger Nikolaus" with his sack full of gifts, but also of the servant who accompanies him, "Knecht Ruprecht", and whose function it is to beat unruly children with a bundle of twigs. Some nineteenth-century commentators sought political significance in the *Struwwelpeter* stories; they say Shock-headed Peter as a German revolutionary, the Scissorman as a censor, Nikolaus as the Czar of Russia — and Hoffmann himself gave colour to such speculations when he wrote political satires, according to revolutionary and reactionary alike just after the 1848 uprisings. If such overtones exist, they have never been perceived by the children for whom *Struwwelpeter* was, after all, written, and they seem to me irrelevant.

Why the anonymous translator should have hit upon "Agrippa" as a suitable substitute for "Nikolas" in the Victorian nursery has always puzzled me. Neither Brewer nor Lemprière supply the answer; perhaps this review will elicit an explanation from readers more knowledgeable than I am.

It will have become clear by now that the new English version keeps more closely to the

German original than the old familiar one. Unfortunately, however, it seems less sure of its levels of speech. The Routledge and Piccolo version, which was first published by Blackie in 1903, read reassuringly like Victorian nursery-tales for children who have not only "Mamma" (accent firmly on the second syllable), but also a "Nursy" who cares for them: "Mc-ow, me-oo, meow, me-no, / What will Mamma and Nursy do?" The language and idiom are all of a piece, and where it won't fit the German, it is the English idiom that wins out. The new version, on the other hand, is subject to some disconcerting stylistic lurches. Nicolas reproves the boys who mock the dark-skinned stranger with "don't's" and "isn't's" — "Don't laugh", he says "it isn't night" — and then goes nil



The Saint Nicholas-like figure of the "great Agrippa" from "The Story of the Inky Boys" in the Routledge edition of *Struwwelpeter*, reviewed here.

archaic when he tells them that the moor "did not choose his *darksoorie hue*". The little hare on whose nose coffee is spilt cries out "Wer hat mich da verbrannt?" in good everyday German; Gibson's "Who has thrown this fiery brand" is hardly on the same wavelength, though obviously nearer to the literal meaning of the German than the charming older version: "O dear, she cried, with spoon in hand: / Such fun I do not understand!" Or take Conrad's ill-fated thumb: "Fort geht nun die Mutter, und / Wuppi den Daumen in den Mund." That reads like good idiomatic German; Mr Gibson's "Wuppi! The thumb the mouth is in", on the other hand, is neither English or American. For the rest, there is an undeniable American flavour about Gibson's new translation: "Mamma" has turned into "Mommy", and Harriet is blessed with "folks".

It might be appropriate, therefore, to compare his version with the most famous of all previous American ones: that by Mark Twain. Here is the end of the "Wild Hunter" episode as Mark Twain interpreted it:

Now by the well in hiding lay  
The rabbit's child and saw the gray  
And glanced aloft with awe and spy  
Unwashed of the coffee spray  
And would have laughed, but changed his mind.  
When that hot coffee struck him blind.  
He knatched the spoon and opened out  
With many a bawling merriment  
Who'd brought this accident about.

But when he saw it was his pa  
He changed his mind again, aha!

Twain's transmutation of the poor little hure into a murderous avenger, however consonant with the spirit of the American tall tale, is so patently unsuited to Hoffmann's illustration that Gibson's more faithful though clumsy version seems to me preferable. The new translation has not made me want to discard the Victorian one, however; that has acquired a patina and a history of its own, and has, in any case, a stylistic integrity which the more faithful, more complete, but also more charmless Gibson version seems to lack.

What, then, is the key to the fascination Hoffmann's verses and pictures exert 140 years after they were first set down? Is the Scissorman story our early substitute for *Oedipus Rex*, and "Flying Robert" our first indulgence in a pleasure later satisfied by Erica Jong? Do we secretly enjoy relling with Shock-headed Peter and Fidgety Phil, blame the stupidity of parents who won't give Augustus anything but the soup he doesn't like, feel that the space into which Johnny Head-in-Air gazes is indeed much more fascinating than the school-work contained in the satchel we see swimming away into the distance, never to be recovered? Or are we being "got at" by authoritarian grown-ups intent on socializing children with tales of terror? It is the interplay of all this which makes for fascination; the ambiguity of it all; and the charming stylization of picture and text which again and again converts potential fright into laughter. It may not be irrelevant to remember, in this connection, that Dr Heinrich Hoffmann ended his days as an alienist whose understanding, patience and humanity contrasted favourably with the often cruel régime of others who had charge of asylums for the insane in nineteenth-century Europe.

We value *Struwwelpeter* also for the key role it has played in the evolution of the story in pictures between Rudolph Toeffer, and Wilhelm Busch; for its imaginative use of expressive gestures, and, significantly, charming combination of fantasy and play with necessary socializing elements; for its sympathy with a child's sense of fun; and, as a child's apprehensions. Of its illustrations Bettina Hörnemann has rightly said that they "produce a symbolic hyper-reality which is far less dangerous for children than many of the photographic representations of similar happenings which they see every day . . ."

That some of the lessons *Struwwelpeter* inculcates are salutary may be an uncomfortable truth for those who condemn the book as authoritarian bullying; but "don't torture animals or beat those who are weaker than you" and "don't mock those whose skin is a different colour than yours" are as justifiable from the point of view of morality as "don't play with fire" and "look where you are going" are from that of prudence. On the feast provided for Freudians by words and pictures, from Frederick's tell-tale tongue and whip to Conrad's missing thumbs, I do not feel competent to comment; but it is worth remembering that at least one eminent psychologist, Charlotte Bühler, thought Hoffmann's book significant enough to name a stage of every normal child's development "the *Struwwelpeter* period".

One of the disadvantages of the new polygot *Struwwelpeter* is that the necessity of accommodating six different versions has broken up the delicate balance between picture and text which is so striking a feature of the original; but for that, its illustrations show fewer signs of later retouching than those of the Routledge version. Let us, therefore, wish Hoffmann's book a happy birthday and many happy returns in its new as well as its old guise, and fade into a polygot sunset with Flying Robert, his hat and his umbrella: "Wo der Wind sie hingetragen, / Jal das weiss kein Mensch zu sagen" — "Oh les vents les ont menés, / impossible à deviner" — "Y como nunca volvieron, / nadie sabe adónde fueron" — "Dove and drono a finire, / no ne sanno lo sa dire" — "Quonam deportaverit / illos ventus, nemo scit" — "Where the wind blew them away / no one here below can say" — or, as the still delightful Victorian translation has it: "Only this one thing is plain / Bob was never seen again!"

John Cowie



# Nowell, Nowell

Savkar Altinel

DOUGLAS UNGER  
Leaving the Land  
277pp. Heinemann. £9.95.  
043481105 X

The subject of Douglas Unger's first novel is the rise and fall of turkey farming in South Dakota. The father of the hero, Marge Hogan, actually grows mixed crops and keeps a few animals. After Pearl Harbor, however, the Department of Agriculture makes it known that the Army needs meat and sugar, and government subsidies will be available only to those raising sugar beets or turkeys. Like many of his neighbours, he opts for the latter and thus puts his future in the hands of the Safebuy supermarket chain, which owns the turkey processing plant in the local town of Nowell.

The turkeys arrive and immediately cause problems for Marge. They have to be housed with chickens so that they can learn to peck by imitating them and not starve to death in front of their troughs full of grain: when they are taken out to feed on grasshoppers on the prairie they tend to break up into separate groups and go in different directions; their droppings constantly need to be checked for signs of turkey blackhead or salmonella; if it rains, they throw their heads back, open their beaks and drown; occasionally there are outbreaks of cannibalism.

After the war Safebuy begins a system of "vertical integration" which involves the farmers pre-selling their unhatched turkeys to the company at a fixed price and then raising hank loans on the strength of their contracts. When feed prices rise, many are ruined because of this arrangement. There are angry demonstrations, television crews are invited from Clieyenne and Rapid City and turkeys are gussed wholesale and hurried in front of the cameras. The company, however, ultimately wins and in the process Marge's marriage to one of its lawyers disintegrates.

Next comes direct ownership of the land by

sell their title deeds and accept employment as "unit managers" of their one-time properties. Unfortunately, as managers they work for eight hours a day instead of sixteen, and soon the company itself begins losing money. An offer by some of the farmers to buy back their farms as a cooperative is rejected as "socialist agricultural policy". Then the government announces a grain control programme, backed by compensatory grants for not growing certain kinds of crops, and Safebuy decides to convert the turkey farms into wheat farms so that it can make a profit by not planting wheat.

With the farms lying idle and the processing plant shut down, Nowell turns into a semi-ghost town. The unsaleable, abandoned houses decay, pieces of paper and cardboard swirl in the streets like tumbleweed, letters fall from shop signs. When Marge's son Kurt, who has gone East on a scholarship from a major university, returns for a visit some years later, he is struck both by the desolation of the place and the soulless efficiency of the town of Belle Fourche fifty miles away which has prospered at the expense of Nowell and now boasts one of the biggest Safebuys in the area.

Had *Leaving the Land* amounted to nothing more than this simple narrative, it would have been an interesting but unremarkable novel about the devastating impact of capitalist business methods on a remote rural community. What raises it on to an altogether higher plane is its marvellously sensitive depiction of both the Midwestern countryside – coyotes barking in the night, the vast plains lying under a dusting of snow at Christmas time, clouds of tiny bats wheeling in the sky at dusk – and human experiences: Marge's father first arriving in South Dakota, backwards, in an ancient Ford that has stuck in reverse gear, Marge and her friends in tight skirts and hair styles copied from *Star & Screen* in the only café in Nowell, pretending to ignore the boys, Kurt learning to shoot with a "forty-five" he can barely lift. Nothing can now reverse the decline of the way of life Unger describes, but his beautiful and haunting book is at least a worthy monument

## Back ups and downs

Roz Kaveney

JOHN EDGAR WIDEMAN  
Damballah  
205pp. 0850315492  
Hiding Place  
139pp. 0850315506  
Sent For You Yesterday  
208pp. 0850315883  
Allison and Busby: £7.95 each.

John Edgar Wideman does for urban American Blacks something of what Isaac Bashevis Singer has done for Jews, confronting them with passages of their past and present, making them see where they have been, what they have done and had done to them, what can be learnt from the past and to what in that past it might be useful to return.

*Damballah*, the most satisfactory of these three books, does all this almost schematically. Wideman presents a lively educational lantern show of vignettes of slavery and dim memories of Africa, sketches of the opposing yet symbiotic forces of passionate religiosity and gritty street debauchery, shots of the power brought to the Black community by its sense of its own righteousness and of the destruction wrought within it by Vietnam, drugs and fratricidal criminality. Both as artist and lecturer Wideman is assisted by the competence with which he conveys a sense of period and of social nuance. His sense of the evolution of Black culture and consciousness in the 1920s and its slow, hopeless decline during the Depression and ever after may be a controversial and historically doubtful thesis. In his stories, though, it is embodied clearly enough, and with enough emotional power to come across as a coherent one.

A dominating thought in some ways shadowy figure in many of the stories in *Damballah*, and also in *Sent For You Yesterday*, is John French, a rowdy patriarch who brings a spice of wicked

fun to the otherwise rather dull and worthy bloodline of Charlie Bell and Sybella Owens. French could have been more interesting had he stood for himself alone, harmless, lively and free; but for Wideman, he embodies the strengths and weaknesses of the Black jazz era. At times, Wideman's sense of the man's impotence lends stories dignity; told in a less serious-minded way, "Daddy Garbage", in which French and the eponymous semi-delinquent find a grave for a dead and abandoned child, would have been a sentimental piece of Runyonese rather than a fable of the marvellousness that can underlie *joie de vivre*. But at times, Wideman's views about this man and his times can drift into absurdity; hardly has his piano-playing, murderer friend Wilkes been, for all French's care, shot by the police than his son, Carl French, is being seduced into a quasi-meatless triangle that leads to drug abuse, the inclination of a small child by its siblings and, in a dying fall, the destruction of French's collection of original jazz records.

Wideman's preferred narrative method is a monologue that shifts uneasily between story and mere meandering consciousness. *Hiding Place* takes Tommy, the young, incompetent and doomed robber from a couple of stories in *Damballah*, and confronts and contrasts him with the half-crazed, great-grand-uncle with whom he takes refuge and the idiot boy who sweeps out the barbers and does her errands. Wideman systematically alternates their voices and interior landscapes; the effect is sometimes irritating like a Phil Spector mix of the storm scene in *Lear*, but often moving. Much of the problem with the two novels and some of the stories is that Wideman does not entirely trust the simple power and clarity of his imagined exemplary tales; he does a lot of fancy, but mechanical literary footwork that pads up rather getting in the way. At his best, though, he joins the body of writers who have made the stark, vigorous speech of non-literary America so much a part of its contemporary literature.

# Hurting, hunting, haunting

Patricia Craig

JULIAN SYMONS (Editor)  
Classic Crime Omnibus  
378pp. Penguin. £3.95.  
040067396  
M. R. JAMES  
The Complete Ghost Stories  
362pp. Penguin. £4.95.  
0140090177  
E. F. BLEILER (Editor)  
The Best Supernatural Tales of Arthur Conan Doyle  
302pp. Constable. £3.60.  
0486237257

In the annals of detective fiction, the short story comes first: Julian Symons has made this point before, and makes it again in his lively introduction to the Penguin *Classic Crime Omnibus* (a collection of detective tales which pretty well achieves the anthology's primary aim: to come up with material both unfamiliar and admirable). Starting in the Rue Morgue, blossoming in Baker Street, the short story, up until the end of the First World War, remained the preferred mode in this particular genre: it wasn't until 1920 that a change in style was signalled by the publication of *Styles*. From then on, the novel was paramount, though the story didn't altogether disappear. Shorter fiction allowed an outlet for kinds of ingenuity not suited to the novel. You get, for example, the story as extended conundrum, as in Edmund Crispin's and Geoffrey Bush's very striking "Who Killed Baker?", included here. With this type of offering the reader is happily led up the garden path, the ultimate effect depending on the aplomb with which the excursion is conducted. Other properties of the especially effective story are the piquant conclusion and the preposterous clue (as in Ellery Queen's "The Adventure of the Bearded Lady", another choice of Symons's); with the latter, our attention is productively focused on a singular circumstance. The short form, too,

doesn't do ill things: if he makes a jolly business of it, so much the better. Symons presents several stories in this vein, all of them good.

The exclusion of extraneous emotion, a requirement of the "modern" detective novel, needs to be even more rigorously practised with regard to the story; generally, the brisker and more laconic the narration, the better. It is Patricia Highsmith's "The Mobile Bed Object", for example, could hardly be drier or more economical; Roald Dahl's "The Landlady", equally deadpan, exemplifies the comic-strip mode at its most restrained. These, to be sure, are stories of the present, more or less; we find other, more discursive or capacious examples from the Symons anthology reflecting the tastes of different eras; as the editor says, no "classic" collection can omit Poe or

## Cracking it

T. J. Binyon

E. W. HORNING  
The Complete Short Stories of Raffles - The Amateur Crackman  
475pp. Souvenir Press. £9.95.  
028562640 X

It was an excellent idea to bring together for the first time all the exploits of A. J. Raffles, the well known amateur cricketer-crackman. The narrator throughout is, of course, his faithful collaborator – earlier his faithful tag – Bunny. A rabbit at cricket, and not too quick on the uptake, but a decent and loyal chap at heart. With his aid one can trace Raffles's progress from the first, unpremeditated crime – a bank robbery committed during an Australian tour – through the recruitment of Bunny and the first sale and bottle of the Widow cracked together; their further successes and failures in rivalry both with the professionals and the police; Raffles's Italian idyll in Bali with the beautiful Faustina (while Bunny languishes in Pentonville); his rebirth as the valetudinarian Mr Macbrin, with a flat in Earl's Court; the revenge of the sinister and malign Count Corbucci

Conan Doyle, and they're duly represented here. These are famous, of course, partly because the kinds of ingenuity displayed in their stories wear well.

You could claim the same merit for M. R. James, whose staid antiquaries, products of a more punctilious period than our own, are for ever uncovering pieces of the past in a highly unpleasant form: "from the eyebrows to the cheekbone, there were cobwebs – thick". James's conduits for his supernatural forces include a pair of field-glasses which facilitate a truly backward look, an unnaturally animated mezzotint, and – most famously – an Anglo-Saxon whistle complete with Latin inscription: "Who is this who is coming?" Who indeed.

M. R. James's stories are all warnings to the curious: frights, or worse, await those who go about, from whatever motive, poking their noses into the ineffable. Scholarly inquisitiveness proves the undoing of more than one seeker after knowledge. Things sealed up for centuries, you find, are simply waiting to be let out by the first misguided meddler who comes along. Dig up a post in a rose garden, and an unnerving face will come out at you from the shrubbery. Go after a buried Saxon crown, and more than you bargained for will emerge from the earth. Even if you do nothing more than sit innocently in an arbour, you may be startled by an odious instruction whispered in your ear: "Pull, pull. I'll push, you pull." A "horrible, hopping creature in white" gets into one story; and an ominous old parson in a cloak appears delectably in another. In "No. 13" a moment occurs after nightfall when two hotel rooms in a Danish town mysteriously rearrange themselves as three. All of these peculiarities conduce to a state of "Anxiety and Weakness at Night" in each M. R. James protagonist – to quote the staunch servant in "The Treasure of Abbott Thomas", who needs to exert all his strength to wrest his master from a non-human grasp.

Last night Monty James read us a new Christmas story of most blood curdling character, wrote Henry James, and E. F. Bleiler. These, it's true, are tales for the dark time of the year, when a sinister pattern becomes discernible in a curtain, and a doll's house may easily seem supernaturally charged. Edwardian out-of-season resorts, sedate Queen Anne houses, historic libraries and chilling crypts – these are among the pungent settings decorously evoked. The supernatural stories of Arthur Conan Doyle (fifteen in E. F. Bleiler's collection, though the introduction claims he wrote only fourteen) are considerably more exotic, and less effective. A retired doctor undergoes a nightly ordeal involving a dead Indian in pursuit of his amputated hand; a person who sits up at night with an Egyptian mummy behaves peculiarly as a result of it. It was Conan Doyle's own opinion that the celebrity of his Holmes saga had obscured his achievement in other areas; his ghost stories, however, do not bear out this belief.

and the final apotheosis: Raffles, a volunteer trooper in an irregular cavalry regiment, is shot by a sniper during the Boer War.

That Raffles and Bunny are, in the end, not as successful a pair as Holmes and Watson, or Thorndyke and Jervis, is perhaps due to the fact that the methods of the hunter are always more interesting than those of the hunted, for Horning is a much better writer than either Conan Doyle (his brother-in-law) or R. Austin Freeman. Where they are solid, staid and bombastic, he is brilliant, fluent and impressionistic. And he has a nice ear, too, for the most prosaic pun: "What on earth are you going to do with this?" asks Bunny when he sees Raffles' "Dye for my country", replies Raffles sweetly. Disguised as Mr. Maturin, he is pushed round the Black Museum at Scotland Yard in a wheel-chair, and shown the relics of the celebrated burglar Charles Peace. "The greatest of the pre-Raffettes", he murmurs in an aside to Bunny.

This is an indispensable collection for the detective story addict. It comes with an interesting, but very dated essay by Orwell entitled "Raffles and Miss Blandish", and a knowledgeable foreword by Peter Haining.

# The managing kind

Robert Fothergill

LORRAINE McMULLEN  
An Odd Attempt In a Woman: The literary life of Frances Brooke  
245pp. University of British Columbia Press, distributed by Academic and University Publishers. £22.95.  
0774801743

The specific "odd attempt" of this awkwardly-titled book is Frances Brooke's undertaking to publish, in 1755, a weekly paper, *The Old Maid*. More generally it is her pioneering effort to pursue a career as novelist, dramatist, and theatre-manager over a period of nearly thirty-five years. Considering the obstacles faced by anyone, let alone a woman, in the volatile and unscrupulous world of eighteenth-century literary London, she did rather well. Several of her novels, notably *Julia Mandeville* and *Emily Montague*, achieved widespread recognition; her theatre-pieces were favourably received; she counted among her friends such celebrities as Samuel Johnson, Fanny Burney, Samuel Foote, and the actress Mary Ann Yates; and her enemies were led by David Garrick. She was a literary personage of considerable repute.

Between 1763 and 1768 Frances Brooke lived in the city of Quebec, where her husband was serving as a chaplain to the English garrison. *Emily Montague* is situated principally in Canada, as is another work, *All's Right At Last*, published anonymously but generally ascribed to Mrs Brooke. In transporting her epistolary fictions to the "secret abode of wood-nymphs" across the Atlantic, Frances Brooke has thus earned the attention of a Canadian literary historian, and has been subjected to a conscientiously exhaustive documentation.

Lorraine McMullen had frankly subtitled her study a "literary life" to emphasize its scholarly-critical focus upon Frances Brooke's career as an author. Quite clearly the aim of the book is to fill a gap in literary studies by assembling into one volume just about every available detail of the conception, composi-

tion, and reception of its subject's works. In addition it pursues the intermittently feminist project of promoting Frances Brooke as one who broke new ground in the advancement of women, both in her odd attempts and in the tenor of her fiction and drama.

Unfortunately what Professor McMullen's study gains in thoroughness it loses in interest. The portrait that emerges of this enterprising and determined woman is disappointingly flat and colourless, obscured rather than illuminated by the proliferation of monotonous detail. Hoping for an exciting account of her life as manager of the King's Theatre in the Haymarket from 1773 to 1778, the reader is overwhelmed by a torrent of facts, some which he could not possibly care about. Thus, every single person named *en passant* in connection with Mrs Brooke's career is painstakingly explicated in meandering subordinate clauses which should never have been released from the confines of the end-notes. An entire chapter is devoted to each of Mrs Brooke's publications, furnishing lengthy plot summaries and character descriptions, discussions of theme, style, and moral import, and extracts from contemporary reviews, British and foreign. The reviews quoted usually agree in finding the works to be ingenious, natural, and affecting, and to exhibit *Vérité, Pureté, and beaucoup d'intérêt*. Hostile reviewers inevitably turn out to be friends of David Garrick, if not Garrick himself under a *noun de plume*.

But where in all this is the living person? Whether for lack of evidence, or out of a reluctance to launch into the more imaginative currents of life-writing, McMullen is loth to stray from the objective, verifiable facts. Here, after an account of the plot, production, reception, and even receipts of *The Siege of Sinope* at Covent Garden in 1781, is her glimpse of the dramatist: "Frances Brooke had at last achieved her life-long ambition to write for the theatre. For a woman to write a tragedy was unusual at the time, but Brooke's was the first in the common, and must have been a great satisfaction." Is that all?

# The joys of death

David Sexton

SIDNEY HOMAN  
Beckett's Theaters: Interpretations for performance  
266pp. Associated University Presses. £21.  
083873064 8

Beckett's critics go on, making more of less. For better or worse, his work is now securely instituted in academic literary criticism. That the man who said "Every word is an unnecessary stain on silence and nothingness" should be pursued by this flood-tide of exegesis is paradoxical, perhaps grotesque, and has been facilitated by a failure to take seriously the chilling premises of his writing. Given this, any new book about Beckett has to have something rather good to say for itself to earn a welcome.

*Beckett's Theaters* covers all the dramatic work up to 1981. Sidney Homan loves theatre so much that he interprets Beckett's plays as work of optimism, happiness and even joy, simply because they are successful plays. Beckett's theatre "thrives on the aesthetics of that present established by actor and audience", he says, which is certainly right – the function of the audience as witness, trying to make sense of what it sees and hears, is at the heart of his work for the stage. Homan, however, so adores drama that he goes beyond this to say that Beckett's plays are great because they are all *generally about* this most important thing, the theatre, too. They are in fact self-reflexive. "The theatre turns to itself." Is his high term of praise, as it was in his earlier book on Shakespeare: "the play's the thing" we are told repeatedly. This is a familiar and depressing claim. Were it true it would surely be a reason to think less rather than more of Beckett. Homan, however, does not make out a convincing case. His argument is conducted with a conceptual apparatus consisting of two terms, "what is said (thematics)" and "how it is being said (aesthetics)".

The critical ploy is to reduce the former to the latter, and be grateful. Of the characters in *Play*: "Their thematic discomfort for us aesthetic comfort." Of *Cascando*: "Aesthetic life springs from thematic death." Homan believes the theatre will save us. "In a joyous sense, the theater is the best preparation we have for any future, and – at length – for death itself." This is quite bizarrely remote from Beckett.

Nor are these contentions winningly presented. The book plods through the works from beginning to end, paraphrasing. His comment has a texture of professionalism derived from being filtered through the massive secondary literature, but makes startling mistakes of his own. He believes Krapp wrote a book of call *Effic* which sold thirteen copies, and he refers warmly to one (or two) of the best Beckett critics as, "John Knowlson" throughout. There are no distinctive critical judgments here, either of the stature of the plays as a whole (Beckett has described them as relaxations from the novels) or of one in relation to another (he thinks as highly of the *Acts Without Words* as of anything). The prose is constructed from critical breeze blocks: "Curious... (when the fact is too dull to stand unadorned)." "I take x as..." (exactly what you would expect), "on the other hand", "In the broadest sense of the word", "what we may call", "I would argue", and so on. Moreover the text is sorely misprinted.

It has been found necessary before to make Beckett into something more amenable than he really is so as to fix him up as a suitable subject for scholarship and teaching, but rarely to this extent. William Empson memorably described Beckett as "like a dog with its back broken by a car, screaming and thrashing on the public road, so that a passer-by can only wish for it to be put out of its misery." Of Empson's dog Homer makes a pet. The process is more dispiriting to watch than any of Beckett's theatre.

# Dancing the story

Julie Hankey

IVOR GUEST  
Julius Perrot: Master of the romantic ballet  
383pp. Daunce Books. £20.  
0903102773

Ivor Guest is the first biographer of Perrot, and one can see why. The man left scarcely any trace of himself except in his work, which itself was conducted in an ephemeral medium. He kept no diary, wrote no memoirs, hardly a letter even. He did not note down his scenarios himself, or comment on them, or express his views on ballet – as Noverre, for example, had done. (He did jot a few notes in the margin of his copy of Noverre's *Lettres*, which Guest gratefully seizes on.) He was, in other words, entirely absorbed in his chosen material – the dancer's perishable body – and in all the equally unending stuff of stage spectacle. He is remembered now, if at all, as the person chiefly responsible for realizing Gautier's scenario for  *Giselle* – the only one of his ballets to survive into modern times outside the Soviet Union. All the more reason, it could be said, to pin him down in a book, and Mr Guest makes a good case – for Perrot, we learn, was the Cluck of ballet. Or rather, Noverre was, and Perrot carried the torch forward into the Romantic period. As was the case with eighteenth-century opera, ballet had fallen into the hands of gymnastic virtuosi. Their technical displays bore little relation to the dramatic interest of the plot, which was furthered instead by long stretches of recitative, or, in ballet, by mime. In these gaps the audience played draughts, or had supper parties. Perrot's achievement was to integrate the two things, the story and its ostensible medium, in order to make ballet expressive of something beyond its own technique. This was called, in Noverre's phrase, *la baller d'action*.

Without Perrot, then, the great dramatic ballerinas of the period, such as Fanny Elssler and Marie Taglioni, were "actresses, no less, and he was called a poet, sculptor, painter. It was said that

through his scenic and plastic imagination the ballet caught the very essence of magic and mystery – more so than any other art form could. And yet, from the published scenarios and a few bits of hostile criticism (which, paradoxically, are often the most vivid), one gathers that Perrot was not always free from gratuitous exhibition. As he got older he piled on plot and spectacle, real rain and fire and lots of flying harness and thick cable (supporting "200 to 300 kilos of fairies") wrote a reviewer of one particular spectacle) until, in the end, he was making ballets five hours long.

Guest is a loyal biographer, perhaps a little more impressed with his subject than his reader can always be, but he does not hesitate to quote a description by Fyodor Dostoevsky of a certain fishermen's dance in which there figures an oar. The oar is at first casually introduced simply as a marine adjunct. It is larger than on ordinary oars though, and it has a notch in the middle of it. The reason for this becomes apparent when, after one of the fishermen has placed one end of the oar against his shoulder and the other on the ground, Ondine, a maid, arrives and places one leg in the notch. The other she extends in the air. "Then she slowly rotates her leg. The stalwart male dancer keeps the oar steady, trying to show that it is no effort, and that it even gives him great pleasure." After a bit, the maid leaps down as lightly as thistledown, and "continues to express her feelings with her legs". Apparently audiences would then call for an encore. "Once again the male dancer burdens his shoulder with a hundred pounds or so of thistledown-light ballerina, and the leg... slowly makes its circle..."

The end of Perrot's life was sad. His public tired of his hazy narratives. He had educated them away from acrobatics, and they rightly saw an expressiveness inherent in ballet which did not need the complicated vengeful Vlasto or the loveless Zingaro to be made apparent. Mr Guest is meticulous. Literary sources for the ballets are brought to bear, contemporary pose.

# Staging the moral

G. McCarthy

H. GASTON HALL  
Comedy In Context: Essays on Molière  
260pp. University Press of Mississippi. £20.  
0876052003

In 1954 René Bray advised the readers of his *Molière: Homme de théâtre* not to expect to find Molière where they might look for Bolleau and Racine and implied that a hundred years of Molière study had succeeded in creating a bogus Molière, the philosopher and moralist. Thirty years on, H. Gaston Hall's book re-examines the context within which we should view the playwright. *Comedy In Context* assembles a dozen articles published over a twenty-year period in which Molière's fortunes have not been all that Bray might have hoped. For this reason, Dr Hall's compilation is both instructive and opportune.

When Louis Jourvet pronounced Molière "mort en Sorbonne" he recognized that a gulf existed between the theatre and scholarly criticism. He saw the creative energy of Molière's comedy reduced to so many statements, and replied with productions which celebrated Molière as a master of theatrical invention, not as the chronicler of the manners of his age. Hall is well equipped to bridge this divide: his scholarship is admirable and the depth of his literary and historical analysis impressive. He also has a fine intuition for the vitality in Molière. While providing a most detailed literary context, particularly for the middle-period plays, he makes it clear that contemporary ideas are to be viewed as a resource. The ideas of comedy live in performance.

Above all I conclude a tight relationship between comic stagecraft and moral significance, which is not that of Molière's sources, but that of Molière. Doubtless the precise nature of this relationship must always depend upon a very personal reconstruction of this stagecraft.

The best essays in this volume encourage a bolder attitude to stagecraft in Molière. For example, the discussion of his recurrent *dépit amoureux* scenes emphasizes the eroticism of performance in relationship to the social and theatrical context, and describes a shared physical experience held in tension with the moral sense. This accounts well for the forms of comedy and is strikingly close to what may have been Molière's own thoughts on the subject, if he really was the author of the *Lettre sur la comédie*. The essay on Molière's debt to Scaramouche corrects an error in W.G. Moore's still indispensable study and provides a valuable suggestion of acting style, confirming the impression of flexibility seen in the texts. In studying the editions themselves, Hall reveals the astonishing fact that in re-punctuating the texts, editors have frequently suppressed rhythms which Molière may have required. Hall shows the detailed changes, and leaves us to grasp the implication of this massive disregard for the place of rhythm in the performance of a dramatic text.

Here, as sometimes elsewhere, he develops his view meticulously without however enlarging on the detail, and in this respect the book fails to satisfy the expectations it arouses. Dr Hall provides everything but the overview.

*To Brecht and Beyond: Soundings in modern dramaturgy* by Dorko Suvin (283pp. Brighton: Harvester. £26.50. 0855279753) contains nine essays on modern theatre written between 1967 and 1977, and mostly published in the United States. The author surveys the politics, performance and aesthetics of Brechtian theatre. There are chapters on "The Paris Commune: Theatre Law", "Structures of a Slaughterhouse World (*Sahel Joan of the Slaughterhouses*)", "Brecht's *Caucasian Chalk Circle* and Marxist Figuralism", "Coriolanus and Utopian Horizon", and "Beckett's Purgatory of the Individual or the Three Laws of Thermodynamics".



## French lessons

Jane Grigson

ELIZABETH DAVID  
An Omelette and a Glass of Wine  
31pp. Jill Norman/Robert Hale. £9.95.  
0790 20473

An Omelette and a Glass of Wine is different from any other book by Elizabeth David. Yet in a sense it includes them all, holds them together. We feel closer to Mrs David herself in this book, and I suppose it is the closest we are likely to get to an autobiography. For a start it is not a recipe book, but a collection of her journalism and other writings: what she wanted to preserve, with extra notes and paragraphs occasionally to bring them up to date.

Here are articles, many from the *Spectator's* great days in the early 1960s, that we have treasured in kitchen drawers, yellowed cuttings now clear again on the page. Relics of our own past as well as of hers, for Mrs David has been more to us, I think, than Mrs Beeton was to aspiring Victorians. We hunted down proper pastries in long blue-wrapped packages and walked home with it tucked under our arms, a sign of revolt against nancarroni-cheese (in those days we did not sniff glue, we ate it). We nervously tried out the new conquetes (italics of unfamiliarity), hegan dinner-parties with her chicken liver pâté or ended them with her orange and chocolate mousse. We tried to make rataouille to the taste of Provence. When George Perry-Smith opened The Hole in the Wall at Bath, in 1951, and was asked for his brilliant recipes, he demurred: "They all come from Elizabeth David".

With the articles in this new book, come quite a number of recipes and some of the best: the spiced beef she restored to our Christmas meals, salt cod revived and improved from Lady Llanover's *Giant Cookery*, everlasting syllabub and the rest of the small book on syllabubs and fools that she wrote for her shop when it was in her charge, stocking oil her

cholesterol. A great pleasure in our lives is confirming Mrs David. By that I mean experiencing for oneself the rightness of her impressions, her information, and her sense of place (markets in Normandy or the Rhône valley, the hidden tavern in a lemon grove, an isolated corner of too little-known Spain at the end of October). Once when I helped a neighbour in France, with food for the *verdange* feast, I found myself making no instructions in French – the lot of pork with truffles from *French Provincial Cooking*; the only difference was black *trouffettes des vaches* mushrooms instead of truffles, since they covered the commune woods that year. Then there was the fun of walking into an inn at midday near George Sand's Nohant, refusing the dark lumpy stew on offer (the temperature was in the 70s) with "Could we just have a tomato salad, an omelette and a glass of wine?" – and hearing: "That's what you English always ask for!" And we got it. Eggs from the hens that pecked round our feet in the bar, herbs and tomatoes from the garden. Elizabeth David's influence on French country cooking?

I enjoy her admirations – Boulestin, Norman, Douglas, Pomlane, Newham-Davis (especially on Russian restaurants) – and have been grateful for books she found worthwhile. I enjoy her acerbities – mayonnaise that is not mayonnaise, squashes (Walls), the rise and flop of the quiche, big bad Bramleys. In 1957 *Pot-Luck Cookery*, unwisely imported from the United States by Faber, provoked one of her funniest putdowns: her review was spiced by the literary editor of *The Sunday Times* for specious reasons and now appears for the first time. Recipes included in that book were: "Pantry Shelf Fiddler", "Festa Turkey-mit Logs" and "Gnocchi Senollina (pronounced Kneeh Oh' Key)".

There is a whole thoughtful chapter telling you how to make out in what might seem to many of us even more awkward moments than having only the ingredients to Kneeh Oh' Key to hand; those in fact when there is nothing in the house but Processed Cheese, or even, if you can imagine it, Nothing in the House but Cream-Style Corn, Cream-Style Corn, Nothing in the House but Cream-Style Corn.

All around us today there are signs of the spread of Foodism, even among the young and innocent. In the most recent "Junior Cook of the Year" contest – won by a nine-year-old – there was a finalist who made a port and redcurrant sauce some four years before he could legally buy the alcohol. All over what one might loosely describe as the "civilized" world, tiny tots in high chairs are being weaned on to salt-free spinach *terrine*, pasta lightly tossed in *pesto* and home-made mousli with sheep's-milk yoghurt. When the toddlers are taken by their parents on the annual pilgrimage to the three-star restaurants of France, they know to behave themselves in anticipation of receiving a corner of truffle. Foodism begins young, and must do so if the serious Foodie is to get full value from the average 51,100 major meals which we all eat during our lifetime.

A Foodie is a palate with a vestigial person attached. He or she need not necessarily be able to cook – indeed, time and energy spent on preparing food may well restrict the vital activities of considering and discussing the plates set before one. Actually eating appears to be largely incidental. Every time a Foodie mounds, either food itself is going in or more frequently, unending verbiage on the

shortest books ever published. South America is something of a Foodie desert. There are, after all, authenticated cases of cannibalism in the Andes (perhaps, however, the ultimate Foodie experience: *Le compte de bel aïni à la sorlette et aux ouberghes* with the *lartines de purée d'aïni*). On an analogous topic the volume gives detailed instructions for the "Heimlich Maneuver" – a medically approved punch in the stomach to relieve serious, choking, an occupational and potentially fatal hazard for the committed Foodie.

Among the features of *The Official Foodie Guide* are individual sections on particular "Foodie bôres" (surely a fine distinction), about such things as coffee, cheese, oil and olive oil, a list of the alleged eighteen best restaurants in the world, and a series of exciting puns: Chinese food, for example, is described as "Wokking the dog". The book will undoubtedly find itself in many Christmas stockings or, possibly, wrapped in aluminium foil and buried in the Christmas pudding (or possibly not). Yet, despite its apparently serious research and exhaustive treatment of the subject it merely provides convenience knowledge – perhaps no bad thing – and is to *French Provincial Cooking* as fish fingers are to *Matejote de carpe et ongulle en meurette au Poth-niard*.

There are three rather good books here, and two that need not detain us very long. Ted Dexter and David Lemmon's *A Walk to the Wicket* is a strange enterprise – a very loose and rambling anthology, the passages selected being bolted together by sections of authorial prose. Matters become still odder when it comes to the final lonely eminence of head groundsman at Lord's: the last twenty-five pages are a practical treatise on the art, which I am wholly unqualified to judge, but would expect to be invaluable.

*Twenty Years On* is rather over-compressed

concerned with chess as a social phenomenon. Why do people play? Why have Russians dominated post-war chess? Why are there so few women amongst the best players? What level can computers achieve? Why do some play so well, others so badly? These are amongst his topics.

They are pursued in a forceful, chatty, informal and sometimes rambling style. The author comes across as a skilful raconteur with a determination to amuse and inform. He undoubtedly succeeds; the book is full of good anecdotes. He tells us, for example, that Fischer's first words on arriving late at the banquet to celebrate his world championship victory were "Okay, where's the money?" He is also well-informed. He has talked to many of the protagonists – Campomanes (the president of FIDE), leading players, Russian émigrés, psychologists studying chess, and so on. The book is most successful when this information, Spanier's chess passion and, one senses, his chilling account of chess in Kuznetsov's hands, is made of a system which can foster the talents of Bolivink and Karpov, but which, in 1978, when the defector Khoroch played Karpov for the world championship, could not bring itself in its official reports to identify the challenger, until the match had gone the right way?

Less convincing is Spanier's discussion of the psychology of chess. He announces that chess

is a substitute for life. What does this mean? It is evidently not literally true. Perhaps by "life" Spanier means so-called *real* life. But that is a dubious notion. Is journalism *real* life or is it a substitute? Is music? And what is implied by "substitute"? There are indeed games the elements of which essentially *represent* something else – for example war games. But chess, whatever its origins, is not now played in that spirit. It is, one wants to say, a *pure* game. On consideration, therefore, Spanier's remark rather evaporates. At other times in the more psychological chapters, I felt the mild dissatisfaction one often feels with a book which describes rather than advances views.

Spanier's book is, on the whole, lightweight but very likeable. The *Oxford Companion*, in contrast, is decidedly heavyweight. It is a comprehensive account of the names, terms and kinds of chess, and it is a pleasure to read. Clearly and judiciously written, beautifully illustrated it is a relatively inexpensive and highly praised.

Such a book is bound to contain mistakes. I noticed one on page 337: the game illustrating the entry on swindles is one where Miles, as black, is the swindler, but it closes with black resigning. Surely not! There will, of course, be others, but whatever they are they will not prevent this book from becoming a classic in the literature of chess.

but a very nearly first-rate description of the immense transformations that have overtaken the game during the last two decades. Christopher Martin-Jenkins writes with an insider's knowledge and most of an outsider's detachment, and his judgments of the changes he describes – one-day cricket, sponsorship, the population explosion that has afflicted Test cricket, players' behaviour, the South Africa boycott, the tribulations of umpires and so on – are shrewd and level-headed. If one has to define his overall attitude, I suppose qualified trust, or wet conservative, roughly sums it up, and I think he has got it about right. This is a good book, whose only major limitation is that it is written too much in the midst of the changes it describes to be definitive.

Until recent times it would have been unthinkable for a Cambridge First to be a cricket professional. Peter Roebuck is both, and his book perhaps gives a better idea of what the routine of a cricket professional's season is like from the inside than any book previously written. In form a journal of the 1983 season as Roebuck experienced it, it is written with intelligence and perception, especially on the failures, the doubts and the self-questioning that haunt the professional batsman in a game in which the penalty for an instant's error or lack of concentration is so abrupt and overwhelming. The great end of the famous pass across backstage occasionally, but never distract the focus from the central theme of what it is like to be an ordinary good player trying to earn his living and at the same time to satisfy his own existing ambitions and aspirations in this exasperating and endlessly absorbing game.

Quite apart from a number of tips and theories which are applicable to all game fishermen, Currie writes, whether consciously or not, as a cunning scourge of those of us who suffer from the vice of rigidity. We have learnt to cast and strike but, once having established our small repertoire of flies and our choice of line, we tend to stick with them whatever the water or weather conditions, congratulating ourselves when these coincide with what we put on offer. Mr Currie, while – rare for a fishing expert – avoiding condescension, makes us aware that hardly any day's fishing need be fruitless, that we must learn to "read" the water.

A potential classic, this elegantly written book with its apposite illustrations by Charles Jardine is ideal for any fisherman's Christmas stocking or wader.

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